

# WIRE



charles mingus on record



sarah vaughan

roadside

john scofield

picnic

joe lovano

the

annette peacock

acceptable

peter maxwell davies

face

michel petrucciani

of

andy sheppard big band

jazz-rock

those who celebrate

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unveiled on  
SOFT ON THE INSIDE,  
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Island Visual Arts video.



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is released on Monday April 30

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(trembone), Claude Deppa (trumpet, percussion), Kevin Robinson  
(trumpet, flugelhorn), Chris Biscoe (alto, tenor and soprano  
saxophones), Pete Hutt (tenor saxophone, bass clarinet), Dave  
Buxton (acoustic piano, synthesiser), Steve Lodder (synthesiser),  
Mano Ventura (guitar), Orphy Robinson (vibes, marimba), Pete  
Maxfield (bass), Han Bennink (drums), Simon Gore (drums),  
Mamadou Kamara (percussion) and Ernst Reijerger (cello).

Produced by Steve Swallow

† 1989 British Jazz Awards

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Andy Sheppard  
Soft on the Inside

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of Roadside Picnic,

Jazz of the bass.

Photo by Phil Ward,

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- |                                 |      |  |
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**an editor's note** Welcome to our 75th issue – another milestone in Wire history. Jazz revivals come and go but we, at least, stick around to report on them. We look forward to plenty of fresh interest in and around the music with much media attention on it this year: now that radio and TV are at last waking up to it, will fortunes be made and tastes changed? While we're waiting for all that to happen, another fine selection this month, from Max Davies to Charles Mingus, for the discerning listener/reader. That's you.

Richard Cook

wire

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## ART BELONGS TO GLASGOW

MILES DAVIS, George Russell, Willem Breuker, Steve Lacy, Bobby Watson, Lee Konitz, Dizzy Gillespie, Branford Marsalis and the Klonos Qt are among the artists at this year's Glasgow Jazz Festival, which takes place from 29 June to 8 July. Selected dates at SECC, Theatre Royal and Tramway venues are Kronos Qt plus Steve Lacy (29 June); B B King (30); Branford Marsalis plus Lee Konitz plus Iain Ballamy plus Tommy Smith plus Jim Mullen (1 July); Miles Davis Group (3); Steve Williamson (4); Maynard Ferguson Big Band (5); Jazz Warriors (5); George Russell Orchestra (6); Bobby Watson & The Strathclyde Youth Jazz Orchestra (6); Willem Breuker Kollektief (7); Dizzy Gillespie's United Nations Orchestra (7). Other concerts in smaller venues include Pinski Zoo (2 July); Slim Gailard (3); Desperately Seeking Fusion (3); Frew (5) and many more. Details 041 226 5105.

Meanwhile, Glasgow's Mayfest Festival, from 4-26 May, also boasts several musical highlights: Tommy Smith Qt (4-6 May); Nina Simone (7); Penguin Cafe Orchestra (9); James Taylor Qt (13); Axel Zwingenberger (15); Steve Martland with Sarah Jane Morris (19, 20); Ivo Papasov (22, 23); Lenny Pickett & The Borneo Horne (23-26); Ronnie Scott (24-26); B Shops For The Poor (25). Details from 041 552 8000.

## NEWK'S TIME

THIS YEAR'S Newcastle-upon-Tyne Festival will feature the Bob Berg-Mike Stern Band, Courtney

Pine, Stan Tracey, Steve Williamson and Tommy Smith; and takes place from 26 May to 3 June. Dates in the main Playhouse venue are the Stan Tracey Orchestra (26 May); Don Weller-Bryan Spring Band (27, lunchtime); Bob Berg-Mike Stern Band plus Orphy Robinson Septet (27); Chris Barber Band (28); Tommy Smith Qt (29); District Six plus King Saba (30); Champion Jack Dupree plus Oris Grand & The Dance Kings (31); Courtney Pine Band (1 June); Barney Kessel, Charlie Byrd, Martin Taylor (2). A host of other events in smaller venues includes Gary Boyle's Crosstown Traffic (26 May); Ian Shaw Band (28); Steve Williamson Band (31); and Chris Biscoe Qt (2 June). Details from 091 232 7079.

## AFRICA HEADS EAST

CAPETOWN-BORN pianist Mervyn Africa takes his new quartet - Claude Deppa (trumpet), Mike Mondesir (bass), Nana Tsioboe (drums) - on a May/June Eastern Jazz tour that visits Lincoln Festival Fringe Club (11 May); Stamford Arts Centre (12); Boston Blackfriars Art Centre (26); Cambridge Modern Jazz Club (1 June); Pocklington Village Hall (2, 3). More dates may be added. Details from 0780 66199.

## ALIAS SMITH AND ... KENYATTA!

TENORISTS ROBIN Kenyatta and Tommy Smith undertake brief UK tours this month. Kenyatta's first UK tour (courtesy of South West Jazz) takes his quartet to Cheltenham Queen's Hotel (25

May); Dartington Arts Society (26); Bath Festival (27); London Bass Clef (29, 30); Manchester Band On The Wall (31). Details 0392 218368.

Tommy Smith's quartet, featuring pianist Jason Rebello, plays Glasgow Mayfest (4-6 May); Manchester Band On The Wall (10); Coventry Warwick University Arts Centre (17); Workington - concert tbc (20); Cumberland Theatre (21); Newcastle Jazz Festival (29); Ayre Bobby Jones (30); Liverpool Blue Coat Arts Centre (31). Details 071 637 5661.

## PHIEW, QUITE A FEW

FESTIVALS ARE breaking out all over the place. Coming up in London are Greenwich (1-17 June), with Andrew Cyrille, Oliver Jones and the Jazz Warriors; Seen On The Green (23, 24 June) with Andrew Cyrille, Pinski Zoo, Courtney Pine and Steve Williamson; plus the JVC Capital Jazz Festival (16-21 July), artists tba. Before then, ACTA Records will have four nights of fun at Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Road N7 on 15-16 and 29-30 May, with all their usual improvising crew. Heading north, Manchester is planning a summer festival (14 June-7 July), which will include jazz from Bill Frisell, John Surman, Andy Sheppard, Annette Peacock, Egberto Gismonti and Stan Tracey; while Ambleside's Zeffirelli's is planning its own "Big Music For A Small Auditorium" festival (8-16 June) with Shankar, Miroslav Vitous, Andy Sheppard, John Surman and more; then there's the Wigan International Festival (14-21 July), which hopes to present

Horace Silver, Maynard Ferguson and Lew Tabackin, among others.

Moving to the Midlands, the Birmingham Jazz Festival (6-15 July) promises the Dizzy Gillespie United Nations Orchestra, Maynard Ferguson Big Band, Nina Simone and the Jazz Warriors. Egressing eastward, Grimsby's South Bank Festival (6-8 July) offers us the Jimmy Giuffrè Qt, playing a special festival commission, the Horace Silver Qt, the Stan Tracey Orchestra, Carol Kidd, Warren Vache and Barbara Thompson. Finally, veering very sharply westward, Wales's Brecon Festival will take place this year from 17-19 August, artists tba. More details on all the above in future *Wires*.

**AND A PHIEW MORE**  
HOLLAND'S 15th North Sea Jazz Festival will take place from 12-15 July in the Hague. Artists appearing include Cecil Taylor, Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Miles Davis, Max Roach, Art Blakey, Wayne Shorter, Von & Chico Freeman, David Sanborn, Pat Metheny, Herbie Hancock, McCoy Tyner, Freddie Hubbard, Branford Marsalis, Sean Grex, Ella Fitzgerald, Michel Camillo, George Benson, Dizzy Gillespie and literally hundreds more. Details from the North Sea Jazz Festival, P O Box 87840, 2508 De The Hague, Netherlands or (0) 70 350 2034.

## JAZZPAR'S NEW CARROT

FIVE CANDIDATES have been nominated for the 1991 Jazzpar Prize, the international award made annually

by the Danish Jazz Centre. The five, chosen by a panel of European and US critics, are (in alphabetical order) Don Cherry, Jackie McLean, David Murray, Martial Solal and Randy Weston. The final winner, who receives an award of approx £20,000, will be announced later in the year. Winner of the first-ever award, in 1990, was Mubal Richard Abrams.

#### VIBE-RATIONS

BELFAST VIBES player Anthony Kett takes his quartet on a short Irish tour this month, visiting Armagh Chazlemont Arms Hotel (2 May); Derry Magee College (3); Portstewart Flowerfield Arts Centre (4); Belfast Dunbar Link Inn (5). Details c/o Brian Carsen, Jazz Administrator, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 0232 381591.

#### THRENODY FOR MICHAEL VYNER

A SPECIAL memorial concert for Michael Vyner, artistic director of London Sinfonietta who died last year, will take place at London's Royal Opera House on 6 May. The concert will feature world premieres of tribute pieces by Berio, Gürecci, Henze, Knusson, Osborne and Takemitsu, as well as the London premiere of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies's *Threnody On A Plainsong For Michael Vyner*. Other pieces will include Lutoslawski's *Chant I*, conducted by the composer, Kurt Weill's *Kleine Dreigraichenmusik*, conducted by Simon Rattle, and Stravinsky's *Symphony Of Psalms*, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen.

Three more May events for new music fans are Icebreaker's



*Signing of the times.* JASON REBELLO invites his peers to RCA Now. Photo by ANDREW POTHECARY.

concert at London's Almeida Theatre on 27 May, performing works by Michael Nyman and others; two evenings of electro-acoustic music at London's Purcell Room (11, 12), with pieces by Bernard Parmegiani, Annea Lockwood, Denis Smalley and others, sound projection by Jonty Harrison; and the Gabriel Jackson Group's concert at Glasgow's Third Eye Centre (17), which includes Arvo Pärt's *Frater* and Gavin Bryars' *Allegretto* plus other works.

#### OPERA NOUS

A BONANZA of modern opera is in store with the world premiere of Robin Holloway's *Clarissa* on 18 May and the London International Opera

Festival scheduled for 30 May to 29 June. Holloway's *Clarissa*, based on Samuel Richardson's epic novel, was composed in 1976 but receives its first performances, in a production by the English National Opera, on 18, 22, 25, 29 May and 1 June at the London Coliseum. The London Opera Festival, at various venues, will include recent works by Zbigniew Rudzinski, Steve Martland and Andrew Lovatt. Details from 071 720 7610.

#### IS THERE LIFE AFTER THE BOAT RACE?

OXFORD, CLACTON and Llangollen all host jazz festivals this month, though the latter two lean

heavily towards the mainstream. Highlights at the Oxford festival include Nina Simone (20 May); Chris Barber (21); Steve Williamson Qc plus Andy Sheppard & Keith Tippett (27); Courtney Pine Band (30). Many more events, at various venues, tba. Details from 071 436 4060.

The Ian Carr Group carries the banner of modernism at Clacton's Spring Bank Holiday Festival (26-28 May: details from 0255 423400); while Dick Morrissey and "dirty bopper" Bruce Turner appear at Llangollen's weekend festival (18-20: details 051 339 3367).

#### SOME LIKE IT CHARD

ODALINE DE LA Martinez and a specially-refitted Guest Stars are among the artists appearing at the Chard Festival Of Women In Music, which takes place from 23-28 May. Highlights of the festival, which covers all types and styles of music, include fusion band Meet Your Feet (24 May) and jazz from the Guest Stars (26) and the Crissy Lee Big Band (28); while works by contemporary women composers such as Nicola LeFanu, Dame Ethel Smyth, Minna Keal and Elizabeth Maconchy are performed by the Martin-Napier Duo (24) and the Bingham String Qc (28); and Odaline De La Martinez conducts a specially-assembled women's orchestra in a concert that will feature a festival commission by Mexican composer Eleanor Alberga (27). Other events include workshops with guitarist Deirdre Carrowright, saxophonist Kathy Stobart and Odaline De La Martinez. Details from 0460 67463.



\* denotes that other concerts at this venue are listed on the same section, pp 4-5. Please note that the deadline for Jazz listings is 1 May.

#### Aldershot Prince Hall

(0232 29155)

#### Stan Tracey

Bangor Tillyery's

(0222 340591)

#### Alan Skidmore

University (022 3833700)

#### Slate Voices

#### Bath Festival

(0225 463362/466411)

#### Ivo Papasov

Robin Kenyatta Qnt, Slim

#### Gaillard

Courney Pine Band,

#### Louis Slavin Qnt

#### Tony Orrell Trio

Birmingham Midland Arts

Centre (021 440 3838)

#### Jack Walzath Sextet

#### Sabbath Arts Festival

(021 414 5703)

#### Beany Waters, Andy

#### Hamilton

#### Loose Tubes

#### Peter King

#### Blaenau Ffestiniog

(022 583 3700)

#### Slate Voices

#### Bracknell South Hill Park

(0344 484123)

#### Danny Thompson's

#### Whatever

#### Tina May w/Freevo

#### Martin Speake Qnt

#### Trevor Watts Drum

#### Orchestra

#### Hard Lines

#### Earthworks

#### Brentwood Monkey Club

(0277 218897/217084)

#### Tina May Qnt

#### John Surman

#### Brighton Concord

(0273 606460)

#### Stan Tracey Octet

#### District Six

#### Sheila Jordan

#### Ivo Papasov

#### Don Weller

#### Mottingham Lockett

Zeph Club (0273 821388)

#### Steve Williamson,

#### Pinkie Zoo

#### Bristol Albert Inn (0272 561968)

#### John Toussaint

#### Martin Speake

#### Ed Jones Qnt

Arenfryn (0272 299191)

#### Slate Voices

University (0272 753035)

#### Against Apartheid

#### Cambridge Modern Jazz Club

(0223 625550)

#### Sean Sulzmann Qnt

#### Kevin Flanagan

#### Orphy Robinson Band

#### John Etheridge Qnt

#### Cardiff Chapter Arts Centre

(011 274 6784)

#### Fred Frith & Tim

#### Hodgkinson

Four Bars Inn (0222 374962)

#### Martin Speake Qnt

#### Tina May Qnt

#### Evidence

#### McPhail, O'Neill, Rogers

#### Cheltenham Queens Hotel

(0242 523690)

#### Sheila Jordan

#### Coventry Tin Tin Club

(0203 302931/306432)

#### Roadside Picnic

#### Crawley (Oxton) New Inn

(0203 302931/306432)

#### Roadside Picnic

#### Ed Jones-John Burgess

#### Grooveyard

#### Deirdre Cartwright-John

#### Burgess Qnt

#### Derby Lord Nelson

(0332 371582)

#### Loi Conhill

St James Club (0332 294120)

#### Cris Biscoe

#### Exeter Arts Centre

(0392 219741)

#### Fred Frith & Tim

#### Hodgkinson

#### John Hosieman

#### Gloucester Guildhall Arts Centre

(0452 303086)

#### Iain Ballamy

#### Hartlepool Images Bar

(04325 480454)

#### Harry Beckett

#### Holyhead Festival

(0222 340591)

#### Alan Skidmore

#### Hull New Adolphus Club

(0432 274 6784)

#### Fred Frith & Tim

#### Hodgkinson

#### Leeds Adolph Theatre

(0532 608101)

#### Fred Frith & Tim

#### Hodgkinson

#### Lincoln Festival (0522 513372)\*

#### Foetus Of Samba

#### Liverpool Blomart Arts Centre\*

(051 709 5297)

#### Tommy Smith Qnt

#### Lianberis (venue ric)

#### Slate Voices

(061 834 1786)

#### Llanwit Major St David's Arts

Centre (04465 4648)

#### Slate Voices

#### Manchester Band On The Wall's

#### Pulse

#### Roadside Picnic

Star & Garter (01235 529012)

#### Rutherford, Haslam,

#### Coxhill

#### Mold Theatre Chyd (0352 55114)

#### Alan Skidmore

#### Northampton Jazz Club

(0604 703548)

#### Peter King

#### Dadu Pukwana's Zila

#### Oxford Jericho Tavern

(01865 725012)

#### Geoff Serle's Empire

#### Strat

Alton (08675 6850)

#### Johannan Gee Qnt

#### Paisley Arts Centre

(041 887 1010)

#### George McKay Band

#### Sheffield Brindley Oaks

(01462 664608)

#### Faincough Group

#### Martin Speake Qnt

Venus ric (01274 6784)

#### Fred Frith & Tim

#### Hodgkinson

#### Southampton Jazz Society

(0703 593741/777474)

#### Herb Geller

#### Wayne Barchelor Qnt

#### Ed Jones Qnt

Maritime' Cooperative

(0703 784345/227778)

#### Julie Tippetts & Maggie

#### Nicols

#### Swindon True Heart Inn

(01273 672242)

#### Ed Jones-John Burgess Qnt

#### Wexford The Stables

(0908 583028)

#### Herb Geller

#### Ian Carr Group

#### Yeovil Quon (0935 28917)

#### Barbara Thompson Qnt

#### York Bopping Warehouse

(0904 633077)

#### Andy Sheppard & Keith

#### Tippetts

#### LONDON

#### Bass Clef N1 (071 729 2476)\*

(071 928 3002)

#### Sheila Jordan

6-16, 15, 16

#### Carmen Lundy

23-24

#### Blow The Fuse, Duke of

Wellington N1 (071 249 3729)

#### John Daisical

#### Di's New Outfit

#### Carol Girma

#### Louise Elliott Qnt

#### Jazz Garden

BNHC W1 (071 499 8567)

#### EMBERS

#### Brixton Academy SW9

(071 326 1022)

#### Latin Festival

7 (071 439 0747)

#### Chats Palace E9

(081 585 6714)

#### Fish Out Of Water

#### Hyflia N4

(01773 733 7703)

#### Fish Out Of Water

5, 12, 19

#### Jackson's Lane N6

2 (081 340 5226)

#### Guy Barker Qnt

5

#### Jazz Cafe N16 (071 559 4936)

#### Billy Jenkins

1

#### Full Monte

5

#### Howard Johnson

1 (lunchtime)

#### Fayaz Viji Band

18

#### Dreamtime

19

#### Dadu Pukwana Qnt

29

#### Jazzhaus, Duke Of

Wellington N1 (071 249 3729)

#### Jon Corbett with:

Louis Moholo, Nick

Sevens

4

#### Evan Parker, Roger

Turner

12

#### Keith Tipper, Julie

Tippetts

18

#### Simon Piccard, Barry

Guy, Tony Marsh

25

#### Prince Of Orange SE16

(071 237 9181)

#### Memorial concert for Alf

Waire, Morley Bug

12

#### Band, Six And Out,

Nick Stevens Septet,

Brian Johnson Trio

14

#### Hand Lines

23

#### Purcell Room SE1

(071 928 3002)

#### John Taylor & Michael

Garnick

4

#### Fred Frith & Tim

Hodgkinson

13

#### Queen Elizabeth Hall SE1

(071 928 8800)

#### John Surman Beas

17

#### Project, Louis Slavin Qnt

27

#### Red Rose Club N7

(01 LMC 071 487 5569)

#### John Telfer & Adam

Brett, Greg Rowland

13

#### Ronnie Scott's W1

(071 439 0747)

Birmingham's famous ANDY HAMILTON, 72 last March, celebrates his birthday with JEAN TOUSSAINT. Some off to Milan. Andy prepares by sharing with fellow veterans, 68-year-old Betty Waters on 6 May. Photo by VAL WILLMER (note address in 21).



## SARAH VAUGHAN

1924-1990

*Brian Priestley pays tribute to the great singer who died in April.*

SARAH VAUGHAN died in Los Angeles on 3 April, just a week after her 66th birthday but also after undergoing operations for skin cancer. One of the key vocal influences of the last 40 years (along with Dinah Washington), she created a large quantity of recorded work and was always especially impressive live.

"The Divine Sarah" was so named not, of course, because of her personality, as several husbands and record producers might agree. It's instructive that the Earl Hines and Billy Eckstine bands she travelled with in the 1940s preferred the nickname "Sassy". But it didn't take a moment for sidemen such as Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker to discover that she had the ears to follow what they were doing and to reflect this in her singing style. It wasn't just a matter of flattening her fifths, but reshaping whole songs in a way that showed acute understanding of the harmonies and perfect rhythmic assurance. Her knowledge of the piano obviously helped, but so also did the melismas of gospel music.

Naturally her appeal soon reached a wider audience – the first hit was "Tenderly" in 1947 – and she experienced the problems of simplifying her style to maintain a popular profile. Hence the recordings and appearances with large orchestras including strings and somnolent rhythm-sections, and some pretty dire songs. If you're not old enough to remember "Brokenhearted Melody", you're lucky, and the same goes for the UK-only success "Passing Strangers", which would be unbearable but for the sublime duetting of Vaughan and Eckstine. But producers like Quincy Jones, responsible for both the aforementioned, also gave her album dares, allowing more freedom and jazz-based backings.

It might be the pressure of being frequently under wraps which led her later work to become increasingly mannered, although against this has to be weighed the brilliance of the invention and the beauty of her vocal tone. There's a magical moment near the end of "Goodnight My Love", a particularly dumb song from the 1950 session that has Miles among the horns, where by prior arrangement she is marched phrase for phrase by trombonist Bennie Green. Not merely magical, but it reminds you that her vocal instrument had all the inflections of your favourite trombonists, plunger-mute and all.

Currently available records don't appear to include the great *Swingin' Easy* (Emarcy) with Roy Haynes in her regular trio, but *My First 15 Sides* (stylistically immature and dimly reproduced on Official) has historic tracks with Gillespie and a few such as "Lover Man" with Parker. The session with backing by Miles (last on *Summertime*, CBS/I Love Jazz) has three remakes from the previous album and a 100 per cent improvement in technique and soul. Most recent in its reissue, the 1961 *After Hours* (Roulette) signals the start of the mannerist period but, with only a guitar-bass duo to show off to, Sarah exhibits superb control and musicality. Hearing this, you could be forgiven for thinking that Betty Carter or Cassandra Wilson – to name two singers clearly influenced by Vaughan – still have some way to go to match her consummate skill.



SARAH VAUGHAN singing "Black Coffee" in 1949. Photo by POPPIE / ARTHUR ZIMMERMANN COLLECTION.  
from the book *Jazz Queens* (Columbia Books). Reproduced by kind permission of W. H. Allen.



## the sound of africa

by Mark Sinker

THROUGHOUT POPCULT history, the idea has cropped up, again and again, that some figure can embody a political cause not so much by what they do or say as who and how they are. In regard to the situation in South Africa over the last 40 years, MIRIAM MAKEBA became known as Mama Afrika in the 60s, when she spoke to the UN as representative of her people; in the 70s, ABDULLAH IBRAHIM shouldered a similarly potent – sometimes almost mythical – role, making it his duty that no

one forget the nature and the fact of the Struggle.

It's a simple, powerful move: but it's also always been problematic. It involves perhaps intrinsically untypical people typifying others. Hard not to have been irritated by HUGH MASEKELA at some time over the years, for example, as he forever chose to blur the boundary between just such a principled embodiment of cause and outrageous self-promotion. His apparent lapses of judgement tend in fact to be stands on his dignity as an ordinary, working human being, just like any other. He has insisted on what he sees as his right to be difficult, to make trouble, to be protective about his career – after else, who else is going to be?

In the necessarily hurried run-up to the huge celebration at Wembley of Nelson Mandela's release – which occurs slap between deadline and publication, so no apologies for not knowing what went on – there were other murmurs of discontent. From the exiled SA/UK Jazz community, once again passed over; and also from those concerned that representation of present-day Township Pop is not what it could be. Ibrahim and Makeba were of course included; negotiations *in re* Masekela were unresolved at time of press. Also promised, Ibrahim's and Masekela's one-time Jazz Epistles cohort JONAS GWANGWA and singers CAIPHUS SEMENYA and LETTA M'BULU. But hasn't genuine SA content been arbitrarily limited so as to cram one more Big Name onto a bill for an event that – after all – won't be coming round again? Which is justified in terms of maximised outreach potential, or something.

The price paid for PopCult potency has always been a certain arbitrariness, never more apparent than in the fortunes of SA musicians, in exile and otherwise. Some noisy spectators demand to know howcum Ibrahim's fêted worldwide, for example, when as fine and significant a player as DUDU PUKWANA is still almost unknown. Once figures like PETER GABRIEL get factored in, this clamour increases.

It might be satisfying to blame our favourite bugbears here: the ignorant racism and/or amoral profiteering of the Trans-Global Recording Industry. Probably as pertinent, though, is the complex nature of the Pop Icon (political division) – whether the person concerned arrived in the right (lucky) place

at the right (lucky) time, and said and did the right (lucky) thing to let mediated mass consciousness make of them whatever was needed. Dudu, a key player in the aesthetic trouble-making of UK Free Jazz, asked the wrong questions at the wrong time. This kind of deliberate outrage doesn't get forgiven.

## ancestral voices

by Brian Morton

PAUL CROSSLEY'S recent *Sinfonietta* profile of TAKEMITSU and his music, well-intentioned as it was, nonetheless underlines how far we still have to go before we accept that Japanese art and music are rather more than dappled impressionism, filigree second-order work unsusceptible to tougher examination.

There was in the late 60s a valuable Victrola compilation series of music from the contemporary international avant-garde, and some important documentation of music from the Chinese People's Republic. Since then, something of a dearth, so it's good to find, entitled "A New Aspect of Japanese Contemporary Music", a well-presented Camerata CD series with useful bilingual liner biographies and notes.

*Sound Space Of Percussion* (32CM-6), featuring the brilliant young marimba player SUMIRE YOSHIHARA, falls outside the series proper, but includes an intriguing range of work: Maki Ishii's *Drifting Island* for 17-string koto and percussion, Takashi Kako's *Horoscope*, and Steve Reich's *Piano Phase*. It also serves to introduce TERYUKI NODA, by way of a piece for flute and percussion called *Edogae*, which it ain't. Noda's work is the subject of the ninth and best of the Camerata series (32CM-58). At 50, he has a substantial body of work behind him. The 1977 Piano Concerto was a high point at the Helsinki Festival ten years ago and was something of a turning point in northern European interest in contemporary Japanese music. It's a piece that sounds improvised, episodic rather than serialised, and genuinely felt. *Edogae*, a work that Noda feels is now entirely out of his hands, is repeated here, surprisingly unvaried. His particular affinity for the piano, and a certain mathematical chromaticism, is underlined by *Ode Capricious* and by *Tris Developments*, the latter played by Berio's great interpreter Bruno Canino.

TOSHI ICHIYANAGI (32CM-5) and MINORU MIKI (32CM-54) are both established reputations (Miki's work has been heard in Europe) but again the emphasis is on percussion, as in the work of AKIRA NISHIMURA (32CM-89), and the effect is rather estranging. It may take a further decade for much of this

daddy  
o

Illustrations by PAUL DENARD SCHOPFIELD



music to be absorbed and completely understood. The danger now is that it will simply become a stopping-off point on the Cook's Tour [apologies to the editor, but he does this kind of thing all the time] of exotic locations and new colour palettes and rhythmic effects. East is read, but seldom listened to with any precision.

*Camerata recordings are distributed in the UK by Impetus Records.*

## amen corner

TO BUILD the Heavenly City here on Earth is a grand dream. But what if the Heavenly City has litter in the streets, potholes in the road and an overcrowded transport system? What if Heaven is a Utopia for the people, peddled by pontificating scoundrels?

Scurrilous preachers litter the pages of literature, but they're less frequently found in song, and still less in black American song. The church, after all, has been the foundation stone for so much music that few have criticised it musically, for fear of appealing to bite the hand that feeds.

One of those few is singer-songwriter PAUL KELLY, whose soul classic (clocking in at an Homeric three minutes and 36 seconds – epic indeed in 1970) "Sealing In The Name Of The Lord" has just been reissued as part of the first Kelly album ever issued in the UK, *Hangin' On In There* (Edsel). It's a wonderfully dextrous polemic, sung with disarming grace but constructed with bitter irony. The propulsive rhythm is light as air, and it's no surprise that the record was a Top 50 pop hit when it first appeared in the States. Kelly's voice is as airy as the rhythm, easing the song into motion with some sanctified melisma that suggested he had intimate knowledge of the Devil whereof he sang.

And what a Devil it was he painted, a villain as garish and slippery as any in the pages of Chester Himes. The conversational flow of the lyrics and the witty rhymes concealed their barbs until they'd done their work: "There's a man on the corner, raisin' a congregation, saying that he's the one, brothers and sisters, that's gonna bring us all salvation . . . Sayin', 'Step into line, can you spare a dime? Step right on up – how're you this evening? – drop a buck!'"

Once into his stride, Kelly doesn't let up. The self-serving zealot is denounced as a "parasite", his fund-raising techniques "no different from breaking and entering". And every venomous word delivered in sweet Southern Soul phrasing whose churchy derivation only adds to the scalding satire.

Paul Kelly wrote and recorded some excellent music in the

early 70s, and much of it is collected on the Edsel anthology. But never again did he, or anyone else, manage the poisonous elegance of "Stealing". The Church is still up for ideological grabs. Paul Kelly reminds us that heavenly pockets, just as much as heavenly streets, can be lined with gold.

## into the dark

by Russell Luck

NEXT MONTH sees the unveiling (via distributors Artificial Eye) of a fully restored version of Jean Vigo's strange and beautiful 1934 film *L'Atalante*. Vigo died at 29, making only four films – of which *L'Atalante* and *Zéro De Conduite* are probably the least obscure. *L'Atalante*, a melancholic romance, was in many ways ahead of its time; intensely poetic, its story of river-dwelling bargefolk is subordinated to the visual tonalities of landscape, sky and waterway. Music predominates, off camera, and on-camera through the symbol of the phonograph. At the time of its original release, the running time was cut back and MAURICE JAUBERT's magnificent score, which incorporated natural sounds and tape experimentation in a wholly original way, was mutilated and replaced by endless reprises of "Le Chaland Qui Passe", a popular song of the time. Even then, the corrosive power of pop was just another tool in a film distributor's armoury. *L'Atalante* was a dismal failure. Six years later the additional scenes were reinserted, the original title restored and Jaubert's score reconstructed, but by this time, Vigo was already dead. Had he lived, French cinema might have looked and sounded very different. Jaubert's music found its greatest visual expression in Vigo (he also scored for Renoir and Truffaut) and their relationship provides the chief focus for the LP *Maurice Jaubert 1900-1940* (Milan A274), distributed in the UK by Silva Screen.

Silva Screen also continue their excellent catalogue of re-releases (or very often, releases for the first time) with a sideways excursion into borderline kitsch. RON GRAINER's *The Prisoner* (FILMCD 042) is presented episode-by-episode straight from the TV tapes on a single CD and includes alternate title music by Wilfred Josephs. In *Like Flint/Our Man Flint* (FILMCD 046) is the sound of JERRY GOLDSMITH on full swagger, likewise his *Sandpebbles* (FILM 048) and ELMER BERNSTEIN's Matt Helm soundtrack to *The Silencers* (SLC 3). Sixties cold-war nostalgia refracted, cut-up and calcified – groovy! There's also the CD issue of NINO ROTA's dazzling score to Fellini's 1965 film *Juliette Of The Spirits* (SLCD 1002) which cannot be too highly recommended. (For more on Rota, see *Wire* 74.)

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*In the wee small hours,*

## *softies, as in a morning sunrise*

*Philip Watiss gets tired and emotional with Andy Sheppard*

*and Han Bennink. Photo by Andrew Potbury.*

PHYSICALLY IT'S hard to think of a more unlikely trio. He of the famous Number Three haircut, the lithe and slender Andy Sheppard, looks casual and relaxed in the faded denim of his jacket and jeans. When he draws deeply on a Marlboro, and the smoke wafts slowly up above him, he looks every bit the media's image of a jazz dude, the cool sax player. Trombonist Gary Valente looks like an Italian waiter. And not a very distinguished one at that. Dressed in his black suit, white shirt and black tie, his chubby, moustached face, razor-sharp sideburns and receding hairline give him the air of

a man who has eaten a tagliatelle too many. Han Bennink reminds you of a Flemish peasant in a painting by Brueghel. A gigantic, gangly, lolling, shoulderless man. His lumberjack shirt, cotton vest and workman's trousers give him a folkloric quality; his ankle boots and four-foot-long legs a kind of deformed double-jointedness.

Yet musically they are dynamically compatible — as you will hear on Sheppard's third Antilles album, *Soft On The Inside*, released this month. Though it is a long way from being a trio LP — add Andy's regular quintet plus players such as cellist

Ernst Reijseger, saxophonist Chris Biscoe, Claude Deppa on trumpet and Steve Lodder on keyboards, and you have the loosely-titled Rhythmic Personages, the international 15-piece band Sheppard assembled at the beginning of last November for the recording and a short UK tour.

Like Sheppard's two previous releases, it's an album produced by Steve Swallow and one that shows considerable assurance and accomplishment. A logical extension of his work with the big bands of George Russell, Carla Bley (one track is dedicated to her) and the late Gil Evans, the album skilfully mixes Sheppard's love of strong bass ostinatos and African/Latin polyrhythms, some prickly free improvising and a mature compositional sense. It is a confident, infectious blend of freedom and formality. The band's debut performance at London's Half Moon Theatre, the venue that commissioned the project through Greater London Arts, had the audience on their feet in appreciation.

And if the album alone wasn't enough to further establish Sheppard as one of Britain's most significant jazz players, old or new, then there is already a film to accompany the release. Produced and directed by Katy Radford, the 60-minute, black-and-white documentary shares the same title as the LP, is very art-house in a snapshot, noirish, occasionally contrived sort of way, and was filmed throughout the band's ten days of rehearsing, performing and recording.

IT'S THE early hours of a Sunday morning, we're in the lounge bar of London's Tower Hotel, and everybody is exhausted. To my right, Ernst Reijseger is being given a head and shoulder massage. He lets out great oohs and aahs of delight. Han Bennink has hoisted up his trouser legs and flashes great chunks of white flesh as he tap-dances in his seat. Gary Valente is, to my left, energetically ordering four double whiskies. All for himself. After a while pianist Dave Buxton falls asleep on my shoulder. And amid this confusion are Andy Sheppard and his girlfriend Rebecca – sitting calmly, quietly and clearly enjoying the scene. I ask Andy how the band came together.

"Well, in the summer of '88 the quintet was at the Clusone Festival in Italy. Clusone is organised to bring together a lot of different European musicians who play in different ways in different areas. I decided to do a big band with the quintet plus Han and Ernst and others, we did a workshop and a gig, and the gig was great – we had a ball doing it – and I said I would definitely develop the idea for the next album and a tour and hopefully for an on-going thing. Apart from Mano (Ventura, guitar), I've played with everyone in the band before; I was with Gary in Carla Bley's band."

With players like Bennink and Reijseger in the band it was never going to be the most conventional of big bands. "I tried to strike a balance between music right on the edge, between what's possible and impossible, so that everybody has to stretch themselves to play it."

I put it to Andy that although his music has always been

strong rhythmically, it seems less harmonically sophisticated, even in this more orchestral setting.

"Well, I wouldn't disagree with you – it's certainly not sophisticated in terms of Boulez, Messiaen or even George (Russell), but I kind of like changes, I like that element of real pretty changes and having spiky people play it, you know, so they take it and play notes outside."

Sheppard says he wanted to work with Han Bennink because "he's the kind of guy who could play for three hours on his own and still be completely inventive". Yet as experienced and versatile as Bennink is, having performed in settings from solo to large groups such as the Instant Composers Pool, his inclusion in the Sheppard project seems at odds with some of his comments in a previous interview (*Wire* 29). One was that he couldn't stand even one other drummer beside him.

"Well, yes, first of all I think I'm not the right person to play with other drummers, but this was good experience for me." Bennink's English is excellent but occasionally wonderfully idiosyncratic. "I'm not very often in this situation, but I've found myself always a very old-fashioned drummer but somehow I'm always in the field of so-called free improvisation. I like to play very much tempo. I've been playing time my whole life; I grew up with all that and I have nothing against it. It's very, very, very, very difficult playing good time. They are rare drummers who can really swing."

How do you and Simon (Gore) avoid getting in each other's way?

"It's hard to explain. Simon's reading the parts and I'm too stupid to read, so I play all the other parts. I like, to have the role like the libero, to speak in football terms."

The libero?

"Yes, you know, libero, the free man, he can move around and play special passes. I see my role like this. Andy may see it different but then I don't give a fuck. When I play, I play and I really like it when you feel a band coming off the ground and there's steam. It's beautiful."

Another confession was that he was too egotistical to play in a big group.

"That's right. But you can hear this; it's obvious. But I have a band leader who accepts me. I think I'm much too wild but it's very nice that Andy takes it. I'm very loud and I'm not that precise as Simon, and there's a time difference, but it works. But actually I'm lying about it; I'm changing a bit now. I'm older now, so I'm a bit more humble. It's good for me."

One Bennink trademark is his use of cheap East German drum sticks that splinter out in all directions from his kit. "I have a good story about those," he says. "I was in Florence and I'd only been playing ten seconds and one part of the stick took off very nicely, putt-aahhh, like an arrow. It hit a lady in the face, broke her spectacles and she got glass in her eye. You go to a jazz concert with Han Bennink and come back half-blind – that's ridiculous. In the intermission I paid her £60,000. After that I decided to play with Paiste sticks and I like them very much. But I'm still hitting people, like Simon, and I've hit the head of Claude and it bounced up to the head of Steve."●



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lol coxhill

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## Alfred Schnittke: A Celebration

LONDON  
WIGMORE HALL/BARBICAN

IN THE 1920s, the Surrealists hailed the victory of Bolshevism as the beginning of a tranced and hallucinatory "rule from the East". Stalin's cultural commissar Lunacharsky retorted angrily that, quite the contrary, the October Revolution was the direct heir of the Western European Enlightenment.

It is understandably hard to grasp, even in the mid-morning of *glasnost*, how dramatically rapid the rate of change in Russian society this century has been and how remarkably diffident the Russian intelligentsia has been about a home-grown culture. With that in mind, Alfred Schnittke's brand of musical surrealism has to be defined with some care, for much of its fractured macaronic is anything but tongue-in-cheek; rather, an honest attempt to put together a viable musical language from the stray hints and echoes that crept or were smuggled through chinks in the cultural *concrete sanitaire* a second and decidedly unenlightened Bolshevik generation had thrown up from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

In 1985, on the shores of the Black Sea, Schnittke suffered a massive occlusion that left him paralysed and speechless. He had just completed a Viola Concerto for the young virtuoso Yuri Bashmet, and the piece took on the character of a "temporary farewell" and a premonitory meditation, in its final Mahlerian lament, on the

nearness of death and silence. It is, nonetheless, as Bashmet showed at the Barbican, also a powerfully transitional work, poised midway between the raw serialism of the 1968 Sonata No 1 for Violin and Chamber Orchestra, brilliantly played by Oleg Kagan and Bashmet's disconcertingly upright Moscow Solistes, and the later Monologue for Viola and Strings, in which the familiar interplay of soloist and orchestra gives way to an altogether more concentrated and inward language.

It's important to hear Schnittke, as the Barbican/Wigmore season allowed, in the context of some of his most potent influences. Inevitably, Shostakovich weighed heavily, though more as a *presence* than as a stylistic resource. The incense of the string quartets is communicated in the same dark minor as Mozart's Quartet No 15, also included; the seventh and eighth are deeply personal works, and the first, in an ironically affirmative C major, makes Shostakovich's pain at rejection in a sort of exuberance that communicates itself to Schnittke's mid-70s Piano Quintet and the Quartet No 3.

The other great resource is that point of transition in music where tonality reaches so far into itself as to self-destruct. Schnittke's completion of Mahler's (literally) juvenile Piano Quartet is a superbly uneasy essay in late Romanticism, as is the Mahler orchestration for strings of Schubert's Death And The Maiden quartet, and Schoenberg's pre-serial *Verklärte Nacht*; add the sixth Brandenburg Concerto and you have some pretty lateral programming.

The baroque strain emerges in Schnittke's 1977 Concerto Grosso No 1, first of that important patchwork series in which the Russian tried out his

episodic style for the first time in a full orchestration. The String Trio, again from that fateful 1985, is a more confidently "polystylistic" work, albeit for smaller forces, and at the same time more secretive.

At the time of the stroke, Schnittke briefly lost all ability to articulate in his native Russian and could only speak, bizarrely, in German. There is nothing nationalistic about his recovered speech, just a restored identity and integrity. Like all great artists, "I have been given the chance to live twice."

BRIAN MORTON

## Threadgill/Warriors District Six

LONDON  
CAMDEN JAZZ FESTIVAL

THIS YEAR'S Camden Festival gave us jazz from dance-floor jive to big bands, from funk to scat. Linking the two jazz weekends was the so-called "townships" band District Six. I say "so-called" because they have been drawing on an increasingly wider pool of inspiration than the musical traditions of leader Brian Abraham's native South Africa. At a time when "world music" (whatever that is) is in the ascendency, District Six sound distinctly European in their mix of folk melody, strong rhythms and free jazz.

On the first day of the festival I found them rather bash and bombastic as they struggled with the strange, booming acoustics of the Town and Country Club. By far the most stimulating number was their tribute to Steve Biko, for which they marched onto the stage the massed brass and choir of the young musicians from the workshop they had been conducting that week. An uplifting performance (expertly

conducted by Jim Dvonik) it was as much a tribute to the festival's extensive education programme as it was to the memory of a great man.

The second time I heard them (in the more sombre surroundings of the Shaw Theatre) I was much impressed. Seemingly loose and relaxed, their meticulous planning and sheer musical intelligence allowed them to build suspense and then make rapid changes of direction and tempo. Supporting the whole was the sensitive drumming of the leader, taking the rhythms from calypso to careening but controlled freedom and back again. District Six are looking well beyond the townships (their spiritual home) to Europe and the world.

Enter genius in the guise of Henry Threadgill, conductor and composer for the Jazz Warriors on the festival's opening night. Clapping out rhythms like a fearsome dance instructor, and directing the flow of instruments with all the curtness of a traffic policeman, he soon had the Warriors in step. They began to sound, in fact, like a larger version of his sextet and certainly better than I have ever heard them before. Threadgill was able to coax a wider variety of sounds, dynamics and moods from the band than they have hitherto been able to accomplish.

First off was the straccato "Theme From Thomas Cole", introduced by Gary Crosby on bass before murmurings of the theme were heard in the brass. The motifs tended to be developed by the composer in terms of texture and orchestration rather than melodic structure. Rising to a fevered blend of horns and agitated percussion the piece abruptly dissolved into a nocturnal mystery. The second composition appeared from the shadows, throbbing like a steam engine that can't quite get started be-

*They know the number!* HENRY THREADGILL rehearses the Jazz Warriors. Photo by ANDREW POTHECARY



fore revealing itself as the jaunty but sinister "Off The Rag". It swung to a climax of impossible drama, suspending the band inches off the stage with its power. I doubt whether this particular group of musicians will ever be the same again.

ROLAND RAMANAN

**John Surman/Jack DeJohnette/  
Balances String Quartet  
John Scofield  
Michel Petrucciani**

LONDON  
CAMDEN JAZZ FESTIVAL

THE PAIRING of the Surman/DeJohnette duo with the Balances String Quartet seemed on the face of it to be the most promisingly out-of-the-ordinary event of this year's Camden programme: so when the ex-Arditti violinist's quartet opened alone with a rapid and curiously awkward piece dredged up from between Nyman and Bartok, serious disappointment began to set in. Prematurely, though: this was a presumably fully-composed introduction by Alexander Balanescu himself, and on the other team's entry what should have been a fruitful encounter swung into motion.

The problem wasn't any musical disparity of approach, especially given Surman's obvious sympathy with the intimacy of chamber-music settings, and (more startlingly) the Balanescus' flair for career-ing off in four different (har-mo-logic???) improvisatory directions at once, but the un-grateful and insufficient am-plification of the strings (it's about time someone took this particular problem seriously). When they *could* be heard, the PA scrambled them into a shrill and undifferentiated

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jumble; when DeJohnette abandoned the piano for his drumkit (showing incidentally that subtle gradations of percussion timber don't depend on being caged in a roomful of exotic paraphernalia) only the visible intensity of their playing gave evidence that something vital and impassioned was going on. I hope they managed to spend some time in a studio before going their separate ways.

Predictably, John Scofield's set at the Blue Note evening at the Town and Country was an infinitely more polished affair, although the main surprise for me there, not having previously heard his quartet featuring Joe Lovano, was the extent to which he rises above the blow-dried crassness of much fusion music. The blues and rock-derived licks are all there, but warped by a peculiar harmonic intelligence into snaking lines replete with oblique turns, hardly ever dissipating into awfully-familiar my-scales-are-faster-than-yours nonsense. I could still have done with a bit less tidiness, especially in the polite timesharing between Scofield and the more obviously energetic but still somewhat safe and unexciting tenor of Lovano, whose solos were mainly remarkable for the guitarist's irregular and splintered flocks of accompaniment.

Immediately previous to this I hadn't (not for the first time) quite known what to make of Michel Petrucciani, who seemed to half-conceal a darker and more turbulent world beneath the high-gloss melodic surface buoyed up by an over-emphatically exuberant rhythm section and Adam Holzman's vapid digital-

keyboard glitter. The range of Petrucciani's lucid and elegant pianism appeared to demand a more flexible and expressive backdrop (or none at all); but of course I could be completely missing the point.

RICHARD BARRETT

**Scott Joplin's  
*Treemonisha***

BROMLEY FESTIVAL

SCOTT JOPLIN never saw his opera *Treemonisha* staged. He composed the work in 1911, but when he died in 1917, only a piano score (whose publication he financed himself) survived him. When the world rediscovered ragtime in the 70s, Gunther Schuller provided a sensitive orchestration for the work's staged premiere in Houston. It was Schuller's orchestration which finally received its European premiere in March, courtesy of Bromley Festival Opera Company.

It was a brave move for an amateur company, but the bravery didn't pay off. For a start, *Treemonisha* is a black opera, about the need for black people to put aside superstition, even tradition, in order to educate themselves for the modern world. A dangerous moral for this end of the 20th century, but not without boldness in 1911. The Bromley production had no black singers. Instead, the action was shifted from Joplin's specified 1884 to the late 1920s. This entailed relocating one crucial scene from "the woods at a conjurors' meeting" to a speakeasy; and there's a world of moral difference between the two.

Such relocations can provide focus where a purely "historical" staging wouldn't. Not so here. Instead, a familiar sort of "Roaring 20s" nostalgia re-

placed any feeling of location or moral edge. The sets throughout were realist, when *Treemonisha* cries out for some sort of expressionism, placing the action less in the real world (whatever that is) than in some collective unconscious. As it was, this began to look like hand-me-down *Oklahoma*.

Even that would have worked if there had been some spirit in the staging. The large stage swallowed all the mobility in Carol Harrington's production. The chorus, absolutely central to the musical and dramatic structure, was strung across the set, uncomfortably miming conversations at one another. The principals sang with their feet rooted to the spot, emoting aimlessly. A few energetic dance routines failed to compensate.

The musical ingredients were more successful. Singing, sometimes tough and ready, was always committed and ardent, and the chorus was, vocally at least, well rehearsed. Gregory Rose conducted with fine feeling for the work's amalgam of European and American idioms, and the London Jupiter Orchestra (a professional bunch) got the best out of some fine music. Joplin had an exhilarating way with a tune, and Broadway would snap him up in no time if he were around today.

Amateur productions on minimal budgets can often achieve as much drama as the most expensive Covent Garden extravaganza. Because of Joplin's complete lack of theatrical experience, *Treemonisha* requires imagination above all else. This production failed to convince me that Joplin's "grand opera" was anything more than a period piece with a few salvageable tunes; Schuller's own recording with the original stage cast (DG 2707083) makes a much more persuasive case.

NICK KIMBLELEY

## Krzysztof Penderecki

### GLASGOW CITY HALLS

GLASGOW, as everyone must be aware by now, is the European City of Culture for 1990, and no area of that broad remit has been grasped with greater relish than classical music. The city is inundated with concerts, far outnumbering activity in any other branch of the arts, but much of it is being supplied by the excellent but familiar local or national orchestras. There should have been a greater sense of occasion than was actually the case, therefore, when the Cracow Philharmonic Orchestra became the first visiting orchestra

to slip in under the 1990 banner.

As usual, however, the prospect of an all-contemporary programme kept the customers away. The cavernous City Halls were considerably below capacity when Krzysztof Penderecki took the podium to conduct the first, and most recent, of three compositions, the *Passacaglia* from 1988. It proved to be a tense, finely structured piece, building from a persistent ostinato figure in the strings through a series of interlinked, counterpointed variations (a regular feature of his work) for both soloists and ensemble.

The piercing tonalities and searing *tutti* outbursts recalled the early, more incisively avant-garde Penderecki of the 1960s, but there were also indications of the rather conven-

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tional tonalities and orchestration which increasingly came to dominate his work. It shared these features, together with a pointed use of irregular rhythms, with the *Viola Concerto* of 1983.

It is not a concerto in the elaborate nineteenth-century sense, but a spare, carefully contrived one-movement work which takes its unity from a recurring *lento* tempo and a tonal centre based on D, with the dominant role in opening out the piece falling to the soloist — in this instance Gregory Zhyzlin — rather than ensemble. It is less harsh than the

*Passacaglia*, although its neo-Romantic overtones are largely held in check.

That cannot be said of the *Second Symphony* from 1979, which positively wallows in a late-Romantic idiom; fortunately, while it shares a tonal and rhythmic language with the likes of Bruckner, it eschews the excessive length of the period. Another single-movement composition, its tautness is its redeeming feature, while the less abrasive sonorities allowed the Cracow to show off their burnished string tone. Composed and played with no hint of irony, it sounded like a work from another composer and another era. Like the largely unemployed percussion player in the back row, it had me looking at my watch well before its end.

KENNY MATHIESON

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## irony in the soul

*Singer, composer, synth pioneer — Annette Peacock has been*

*skating on her own skis for 20 years; Jonathan Coe reckons she's*

*still the one. Photo by Mark Doast.*

BESIDES NEVER teaching her how to cook (and yes, that is why she's so skinny), Annette Peacock's mama never encouraged her to go into music, either.

"She warned me off it and I always resented her for doing that," she says, "but I've had nothing but pain and grief from it, you know, so she was absolutely right."

Now hold on — nothing but pain and grief? All right, so her walls aren't plastered with gold discs, and she must be getting tired by now of seeing less talented, less innovative artists shooting past her in the fast lane to commercial success. But Annette Peacock doesn't look like a sad, disillusioned soul to me. On stage at her recent London gigs she seems newly confident, a focus of mesmerised attention flanked by electronic hardware and a trio of fabulous musicians; in person, through an unexpected shyness, she still radiates integrity and a sort of quiet determination.

She's been making records for 20 years now, and writing songs for longer than that, but it makes little sense to talk of "progression" or "development" in a career which has followed none of the usual patterns. "The marketplace is moving so slow," she complains at one point, and you do get the sense that Peacock must spend half her time waiting for the rest of the world to catch up. When I venture to suggest that she has been "influenced" by rap, for instance, she reminds me that she was already rapping on her very first LP, *Revolve*, back in 1969. Point taken.

That was when she was making her initial, pioneering

ventures into electronics. She had been writing music for Paul Bley — not so much songs for improvising as "environments he had to perpetuate" — but became so intrigued by the possibilities of the newly-invented synthesiser that she talked Bley into getting one ("I really didn't leave him alone about it"). In those days, of course, this involved something more than just walking into your local branch of Dixon's: in fact it meant wheedling one out of Robert Moog himself.

"Paul was very practical and sensible about it. He said if we go down to see Moog, we're gonna take a station wagon, and we're gonna leave with it that day: which is precisely what we did. And for the first six months we didn't know what the hell to do with it. I mean, there wasn't any information, and anybody you talked to who had it in the studio — because it wasn't conceived for live performing — they were very secretive, very *protective* about it. I remember Gary Peacock [her former husband] came by one day, and we had it stashed in the hall, covered with a curtain, and he pulled the curtain back and he said, 'What the fuck is that?' 'Cause no one had even seen them."

THE FIRST performances at the Village Vanguard were fairly chaotic, by all accounts: "We had people like John McLaughlin and Tony Williams sitting out in the audience, and they had to wait 20 minutes between songs while I was changing patches." But she went on to achieve wonders with



the instrument, inventing a way of singing through it which some boffin from an electronics magazine scoffed at only last year, assuring her that it wouldn't have been possible at the time. This period is documented on the RCA LP, *I'm The One*. "It was really exciting to me because I'd never done that music before, with chord changes or time or anything with a beat, so I thought it was funny. You know, that it was humorous: almost camp. But a lot of people took it seriously, and that astonished me."

One such person was David Bowie, who asked her to tour and record with him; she told him to buy his own synthesiser and learn to play it himself. Committed to following her own path, Peacock continued to tour Europe with Bley and Han Bennink, and then settled in England when a friend, out of the blue, offered her free use of a house in the country. Thus began a reclusive phase which eventually led to the intimate and introspective music of *Skyskating*, her only completely solo album and the first on her own *Ironie* label. It was followed by a compilation LP, *Been In The Streets Too Long*, gathering together some recordings from the mid-70s, and then the gorgeously abstract and melodic *I Have No Feelings*, which also featured percussionist Roger Turner.

Even this arrangement hasn't brought her complete autonomy, though. "When I first started, independent distribution was really wide open, it was a very healthy atmosphere, and

then somewhere between '84 and '86 the bottom dropped out, and a lot of people went out of business. By the time I put out *I Have No Feelings*, independent distributors weren't wanting to accept anything that sounded unusual, so I had to sit back and think, you know, I'd better make the next one so that it slips by the A&R man. It's got to have time, it's got to have a band, it's got to have chord changes and stuff like that. I just grabbed my freedom through the words."

Hence her 1988 LP *Abstract-Contact*, combining solid rap and dance rhythms, adventurous voicings ("I cannot stand major chords. I find them so sweet, so insipid") and lyrics exploring the areas of emotional and environmental politics which she mapped out as her own long before they became fashionable. It's a vein which her next release, a quartet album for which she's already written the songs, should take even further.

Never complacent about her work, Peacock is now simply happy to have found a group of young musicians with whom she feels a rapport (particularly bassist Mike Mondesir) and to be playing live again: "I'm getting to enjoy it more and more." It's not as if she's attained some final, long-awaited goal, but "There comes a point, you know, when you think you're mature. All the things have come together as a player, as a performer, as a writer, and you feel that . . . you deserve."

Annette Peacock deserves no doubt about it. •

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## sco', lo' & co

*Ye! Team of the moment is ace guitarist*

*John Scofield and tender lover Joe Lovano.*

*Mike Fish (Sax) and Chris Parker (Lo)*

*find them with time on their hands.*

*Photo by Andy Rumball.*

O K, S C O ' s signed to Blue Note, he has his best-ever album in the racks, he played a barnstorming tour of the UK and most are agreed that he's leading the most impressive new current in the fusion stream. What we really want to know is—does Charlie Haden really only have one jacket?

"No! Come on! Gee, come to think of it, I've never seen him in another jacket. Maybe he has six or seven all the same. Someone told me that they saw him doing his laundry and he had ten shirts all the same. There's a man who's found something that *works*. But I'm the same. You can't go out on tour for a month and keep your shirts in good shape."

John Scofield himself is in very good shape. He has a new pair of spectacles (to go with his new contract?) and is clearly enjoying a career which is making him into the most sought-after of sidemen ("I have to watch it. I'm playing that same solo on a lot of records. The thing is, someone who I really want to play with always calls") as well as a formidable leader.

*Time On My Hands* sounds like my idea of the perfect modern session—jazz chops and time electrified by a dash of rock attack, cooked over a beautiful set of originals. If you haven't heard "Let's Say We Did" or "So Sue Me" yet, you're missing some of the best writing around at the moment. The bonus is the band Sco assembled for the session—Haden and DeJohnette locked into their best form, and Joe Lovano breezing into Wayne Shorter's role with perfect aplomb.

"I've known Joe since 1971," says John. "We both went to Berklee together. I can remember the first time I heard him play. I was sitting in French class, taking academics to appease my parents, and he was practising across the way. I thought, hey, that sounds good."

Now the tenorman is in the touting quartet, with Anthony Cox and John Reilly. A pity, perhaps, that the great group with Gary Grainger and Dennis Chambers is gone?

"It wasn't that I didn't like that band. After a while, we sort of started to repeat ourselves. Part of me was wanting to stretch out in a way that that band didn't do. After I do something, it's real easy to overdo it. I had a trio with Steve Swallow and Adam Nussbaum and we really did some stuff, but I'm real glad it ended before it got stale."

Do groups get sick of each other?

"Yep. Some groups aren't meant to be together and don't stay together too long. Some do. Sometimes I've heard a group and thought, these people shouldn't be together any more. The magic's gone. But other times—the MJQ, this combination still works. No matter what you think of the music, they have a certain thing that they do which still works. If you play a music that has a life of its own, you tend to put up with anything the other band members may do!"

After his years as a quiet-jazz-guy with Enja, and the tenure with Miles Davis, John has put together a rep and a discography which trumps almost any other guitarist of now one cares to name. Maybe the only other contender is . . .

"The last guy to blow me away and make me look at the guitar seriously was Bill Frisell, and really that's the best thing that's happened to me. His approach was so different to mine and I learned just little things, things I can't begin to tell you about, about the way I approached the instrument. If you look at it like that for a moment, who else are you going to benefit from?"

Let's wrap up on another much-discussed point in the Scofield book. Does his wife choose all the song titles?



"A lot of them, about 60 per cent. Her brother's come up with another ten per cent. Adam Nussbaum thinks of at least one on every record. We think of thousands of names, and I edit it down."

What about that one "The Boss's Car"?

"That's mine, because the song is plagiaristic. I wrote it on tour in France, a simple blues tune. My wife said, you know what that is? 'Pink Cadillac', the Springsteen tune. Uh oh! But it's *also*," he grins, "a generic blues lick, right?" •

IT WILL surprise no one who has been exposed to the controlled power of Joe Lovano's tenor saxophone that his favourite term of approval is "beautiful". His concern with the aesthetics of his craft is manifest not only in each carefully weighted contribution to the music of such leaders as Paul Motian and John Scofield, but also in his compositions, whose individuality is in no way compromised by Lovano's clear admiration for the music of, among others, Hank Mobley, Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane.

He himself is quick to point to a more immediate, intimate influence on his musical development: "I come from a real musical family; my dad played saxophone and I had two uncles who played tenor and one who played trumpet. But it was my

dad, Tony Lovano, who was the real jazz player. He played in the style of Gene Ammons, but he also had a record collection with Charlie Parker, Lester Young, Sonny Stitt, so I learned from an early age about developing a personality with music rather than just copying one kind of player — really trying to find your own sound."

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, on 29 December 1952, Joe Lovano was being taken to gigs by his father at 13: "He'd leave me on the bandstand alone with his rhythm section and I was studying tunes all the time, so at that age I could call the key and count them off. That gave me a lot of confidence." After graduating high school in 1971, he went to Berklee for a couple of years, meeting future collaborators John Scofield and Bill Frisell there, before moving back to Ohio and playing with organist Lonnie Smith. Lovano made his first recording with Smith, George Benson and Ben Riley — *Aphrodisia For A Groove Merchant* — in 1974, then toured with another organist, Jack McDuff, before moving to New York in 1976.

This new location not only provided him with a "beautiful time — I was 23 and working with Albert Dailey and Chet Baker", but it also, perhaps more importantly, brought him to the attention of Woody Herman's tenor and alto player Joe Romano, leading to his being recruited into Herman's band. The highlight of his three-year stint was a 40th-anniversary concert at Carnegie Hall featuring all Herman's great alumni: Zoot Sims, Al Cohn, Jimmy Giuffrè, Jake Hanna and Stan

## LIGHT UP A LEGEND

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Getz — "My biggest thrill was standing next to Stan Getz while he played the lead on 'Early Autumn'." Lovano left Herman in 1979 and the following year began his still-surviving association with Mel Lewis's big band, under Bob Brookmeyer. He has fond memories of the late drummer/leader: "Lewis was one of the most creative cats on the scene. Max Roach, Art Blakey, Roy Haynes, Kenny Washington, John Riley — all these cats would come and hear that band."

Lovano is particularly well qualified to judge drummers, being one himself — "My dad bought me a drum set when I was teal young" — and in the 1980s he began a second long-lasting collaboration with another: Paul Motian. In complimenting the drummer, Lovano characteristically related Motian's musicality to his own aesthetic development: "Paul is a master of orchestration, so if you give into it, you can't help but learn. I'm not the kind of player who just learned a bunch of licks and then plays them with everyone I join; I try to really get into what everyone's playing around me and find my ideas. All the beautiful jazz players have that characteristic: they sound like themselves each time, but on every record, in every setting, there's a wealth of ideas that just happen from the moment and the personnel." Lovano completed a trio of drummer/leaders by joining Elvin Jones on a European tour in 1987, but reserves especial praise for two of his collaborators in another ongoing project, Charlie Haden and Dewey Redman in the former's Liberation Music Orchestra: "I learned so much

about dynamics, tempo and rhythm from them. I draw a lot from those inside, subtle places in my playing — when Charlie plays a bass solo, he turns his amp down and the sound just fills the room because he attacks the note, doesn't just let his amp do the work. A lot of horn players want a fast, bright sound. I want a sound with fast brightness in it, but I also want a deep, round tone, a sound with a wide range of dynamics and colours."

Which brings us to Lovano's own music: he's released two Soul Note albums as a leader, an intriguing duo album of free improvisations with drummer Aldo Romano, and is currently nurturing a pet project, a wind ensemble featuring trombonist Gary Valente in addition to a number of Lovano's more frequent collaborators.

"Even when I play free, I'm still feeling harmony and rhythm and trying to incorporate a free approach within structured forms. Recently, I played with Tony Oxley, Miroslav Vitous and Enrico Rava, and the music was free as far as tempo and harmony went, but with a clear direction that you could follow like a roadmap. If you're a free player without a harmonic approach it can be repetitious. On the contrary, there is Keith Jarrett: his stuff sounds like written music, the way he moves his harmonies. He's inside all the colour of the harmony and the rhythm together, not just playing whatever he wants; he's letting one thing lead to another — that's the kind of approach I want."



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# BIG SIR

*Sir Peter Maxwell Davies – Max to his friends – is the most distinguished UK*

*composer of his generation. Brian Morton follows the trajectory of a brilliant career*

*that encompasses music for Mad Kings, Children's Chorus and Orkney Weddings.*

*Photo by Neil Drabble.*

THERE IS a photograph that says everything. Peter Maxwell Davies strides at the head of a band of child musicians. A piper without a pipe, it is he who looks entranced; the children look merely concentrated. In the background, there is a standing stone, moor, sea – an atavistic landscape.

It might also be Percy Grainger, but that the shock of curls is black-to-grey, rather than Grainger's self-consciously Aryan blond and that Grainger's public virtue camouflaged a disconcerting private vice and a thoroughly unsublimated violence alien to Davies. Musically, at least, there is some kinship between them. In both, there is the same extraordinary range of effort, folkishly simple to dazzlingly complex, the same iron discipline and indifference to schools, the same suspicion of (Grainger's words) "the spectacle of one composer producing music for thousands of musical drones" and, fundamentally, the same total integrity. Grainger's ideal was a music that was "cosmic and impersonal, and thus fundamentally differentiated from the strongly personal and 'dramatic' music of non-Nordic Europe with its emphasis upon sex, possession, ambition, jealousy and strife"; Davies has made a music that exactly balances the personal and the cosmic, the dramatic and the purely musical, and he has fashioned it out of those self-same fallen ingredients.

Whereas Grainger's "farthest north of humanness" was a

lonely self-violence, Davies's is a small croft on a northern island. He moved to Hoy, in Orkney, in 1970, and there rediscovered a community with something like that old anthropological ideal of art as making. "People who make music are much more receptive because they know from the inside what it's like to be sitting there playing, or standing there singing." Davies's first job, as a music master at Cirencester Grammar School, followed hard on the heels of master-class stints with Goffredo Petrassi in Italy and Roger Sessions and Milton Babbitt in the States and was a kind of re-education in the poverty of theory.

Though widely known and respected as a composer of vocal, theatre and instrumental works for children, he takes a sceptically lower-case view of the Romantic Child.

"They're little horrors, and there's no getting round that, but they have got huge potential as people who improvise and create marvellous music. They *do* have an innate grasp but it's got to be directed. There is a place for freedom within music, but so often when people are given freedom, what comes out has an awful family resemblance to what came out the last time and the time before. That's doodling, and doodling I find very unimpressive. When I used to be in a classroom situation I didn't care what they did so long as they were directing all their person, all their being, towards making music."

The same is inescapably true of Davies himself, in works



like the ten-year-old Second Symphony, which is an astonishing act of compression, for all its rangy 40 minutes, and of variation.

DAVIES WAS born in Manchester in 1934. It was the year that Elgar and Delius and Holst all died, and thus a cusp in British music, with Aquarius – and Schoenberg – rising. Davies's birthdate lay within an astrological whisker of Harrison Birtwistle's and together, along with near-contemporaries Alexander Goehr, conductor/arranger Elgar Howarth and the late John Ogdon, they were, briefly, the "Manchester School" at a time when most 'contemporary' music-making in Britain (and it's a designation Davies obviously dislikes) was pure Brummagem. Together, Davies and Birtwistle formed the Pierrot Players, an ensemble whose forces were aligned on Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* and whose ethos, both in 1967 and when they metamorphosed, under Davies's sole directorship, into the Fires Of London, was a powerfully dramatic one.

In 1967, Birtwistle had just finished his "tragic comedy or comical tragedy", the brutal *Punch And Judy*, which, along with Davies's *Revelation And Fall* of the same year, established a significant new strain of British music-theatre. It's fair to suggest that Davies's works in that style, most notably the *Eight Songs For A Mad King*, and the flayed, "silent" *Vesalii lones* for dancer, cello and ensemble, both from 1969, and *Blind Man's Buff* and *Miss Downthorne's Maggot* later, now show a little less strain than *Punch And Judy*, which is a bit like a Sunday-school production of the *Marat/Sade*. Whatever it is, Davies's violence which is the more convincing, because more controlled, and it was Davies who seemed to see the imaginative potential in constraint.

"We turned to work like that because of an interest in opera" – Davies has said elsewhere that his first musical experience was *The Gondoliers* – "but at that stage there was no chance to get an opera on and, just as Stravinsky did with *The Soldier's Tale*, post-World War I, one wanted to work in a theatrical situation with the minimum number of people, at minimum expense, as part almost of an economic exercise. What it did was make a plus out of a minus." The plus was a conflation of the musical and the dramatic that remains a distinctive feature of all of Davies's work. In *The Lighthouse*, a chamber opera from 1979, "the man in charge of the court of inquiry isn't on stage at all because at that time we didn't have enough money to have an extra character. So it's the horn in the instrumental group who poses the questions and what the question becomes clear when the character on stage gives the answer."

Such interactions are even more obvious in *Eight Songs*, where the instrumentalists are caged like George III's linnetts, being taught to sing; at the climax, in his distress, the king smashes the violin. "At the first performance, the audience was pretty lively, and there were yells of 'Rubbish!' and God knows what else, but that you can cope with and I thought that even so this might be a piece that would get done once or

twice. It turns out to be one of the pieces of mine that's done most. There must be more Mad Kings running around the world than I ever thought possible."

THAT HE didn't might betoken innocence as much as modesty, except that Davies's northern hermitage was very little of retreat about it. Both politically and musically, he is very much a hands-on performer, concerned more with the practicalities – "how things work" – than with the abstract philosophies of music-making. "By doing it oneself, one learns an awful lot and shifts a lot of excess baggage." At the same time, the background in music-theatre has reinforced Davies's obsession with masks and disguise. Even his non-vocal music is intently guarded and mysterious, its processes hidden away. "Certainly in my own music, the processes are my concern, I hope the conductor's concern, but in the first instance, certainly not the audience's concern."

"This is probably, at least in part, a reaction against the attitude when I was much younger – and particularly in the 50s, when the programme note explaining the process, what the music was about, was so often much more interesting than the music itself. A lot of audiences and critics who seem to want to understand contemporary music, so-called, are so used to that programme note that it's almost become a substitute for listening. I recently wrote a cello concerto. I tried very hard, but I simply couldn't write a programme note. I knew the processes in that piece, but I was not going to tell people about them, because I felt this would obscure the listening in some way. If I were to tell people what I hear in the *Ernest* – a familiar work Davies firmly believes stands in need of a little estrangement – "before I conducted a performance of it, they would be listening to something that was prejudiced."

The cello concerto is one of a new series of "Strathclyde Concertos", fruit of Davies's new association, since banking down the Fires, with the broader palette of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Again, it illustrates his almost fanatic closeness to the point of performance.

"An interesting thing that has been happening lately when I've been writing, particularly since conducting Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, whose scores are all written in the correct transpositions, is that I've started to do that myself. I found I was thinking of the clarinet piece so much as the clarinet was fingering it that it just became second nature. I'm sure that's how the older composers thought. When Schoenberg began writing everything in C, there was a change in attitude. Conducting, you feel that some composers must have been thinking, say, the horn part at the pitch they hear it, rather than at the pitch at which the player plays it, and that because of that, they write it with a wrong sense of timbre. It's a very subtle thing, which I've only recently become aware of."

Davies's new sequence of concertos are written as it were over the cellist's, oboist's, clarinetist's shoulder, and there is a hint and shadow in their mix of deceptive simplicities and straightforward profundities of a teacher learning again from his class. "I'm hearing my way slowly into them." ●





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# riding

Leading jazz funksters Roadside Picnic tell

on

'Mad' Mike Fish how their latest recording

a wolf

is a unique fusion of lick and lycanthropy.

note

Photo by Phil Ward.

"I T' S A book by Herman Hesse. You might remember it from your hippie days."

It's the Roadside Picnic interview, the meeting with our prime contenders for Most Eminent Fusion Band, and we're talking about *Stuppenwolf*? But there's good reason. The second Roadside album, *For Mad Men Only*, is a part-portrayal of Hesse's book, at least in its first four tracks. Sounds forbidding. The result, though, is less intimidating than it sounds, since the second sitting at the Picnic is actually an accomplished and exciting advance on their debut *Novus* set.

Mario Castronari, bassist, composer and, I suppose, the leader of the group, is a man who takes his concepts seriously. Just as the very name of the band is derived from a novel, so does Castronari seek inspiration from non-musical texts: "It's choosing your company. Books are a great universe of experience." It's also something of a relief to find a group that seeks out a thematic thread in their work, rather than the bland music-speaks-for-itself *musica operandi* which most bands adopt. One could wince at the thought of the return of the concept album, but *For Mad Men Only* is something, er, else.

If the record is about "eternal problems, eternal truths, expressed in music", it's also about some very fine playing. British fusion, jazz-rock or what-have-you is both a noble and an enfeebled tradition. If one traces the path back to such pioneers as Soft Machine and their Canterbury relatives, the character of the genre, its comfy Englishness and spiky smalltown pugnacity alike, still sars up with a certain honour in the 90s. Pinski Zoo might claim their cues from Ornette and Hendrix but they remind me more of a grimmer sort of 70s fusion: Isotope, early Landscape, the implied 'jazz' of such unlikely bands as Gentle Giant. People still rediscover the merits of Nucleus and their Vertigo albums, Gilgamesh, Upp.

The trousers on the album sleeves might look daft (honourable exception: Fred Frith) but the best of British fusion is an enduring phenomenon.

The 80s, though, came close to undoing all that. As jazz-funk took over from jazz-rock in fusion's top drawer, British bands suffered — hardly surprising, when we could scarcely field a decent British soul act of any sort. Aside from such hardy and neglected figures as Jan Kopinski, nobody seemed prepared to try anything more than the litest of jazz-pop. Shakarok were probably the leaders of homegrown fusion in the 80s. As jazz revivalists dug out old Blue Notes and turned back to Coltrane and Rollins, authenticity became the necessary objective and new fusions were traded for old legitimacies.

Suddenly, it now seems that electricity is ready to be back in fashion. Names like Parliament and Hendrix and Pastorius are stacked high on lists of influences; even Peter King, the most distinguished of British boppers, has done his fusion bit. Alongside the hard-bop units which trundle through the London venues, there are Desperately Seeking Fusion, Lateral Thinking, Hard Lines, So It Goes, Borderline . . . and Roadside Picnic.

It's tempting to hang them on the peg of high-art fusion. Next to the scrawling energy of Pinski Zoo, they sound like souls of refinement, the 'acceptable face' of jazz-rock. Castronari's compositions are full of tricky rime-changes, harmonic sleight-of-hand and a sometimes fiendishly high level of interplay. A couple of pieces on the new set, "No Blues" (originally just a warm-up tune for the band) and "Victoria Park Forever", run off comparatively conventional grooves, but the opening four tracks and the *tour de force* finale of "Steve On The Beach" test the band's mettle. John Smith's keyboards

presented by KAREN BEADLE



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recall Zawinul in his earlier, experimental period, pen-and-ink drawings over electronic thunder; Mike Bradley's drums are a concentration of rolls and fills; Dave O'Higgins, functioning as more-or-less frontman, voices Mario's melodies and takes off into the gleam of Brecker-land for his tenor solos. Most refreshing of all, perhaps, is the sound of Castronari himself, adamantly refusing to give up his acoustic bass and holding down the human heart of the music.

What comes out of all this is a swinging, hi-tech, happy/sad music. The pieces are mostly either melancholy pastels or stomping tunes. What might lock them out of the spurious elite of jazz-dance is the complexity of the material: you can't, as they say, dance to it. Does it bother them that the audience for, say, Working Week might deem Roadside Picnic as too stylised, too "difficult"?

"But all those things are not true!"

"Well, compared to what we've been told is Acid Jazz, it's very complicated. Compared to Stravinsky, it's very simple."

"Anyway, that's why 'No Blues' and 'Victoria Park' are on the album. They're like pop tunes with a Roadside stamp on them."

ROADSIDE PICNIC formed around Mario Castronari's compositions, and he still writes virtually all of their material. What was something of a workshop band grew into a group of enough coherence to attract major-label attention: they are still one of the only band signings in the recent upswing in British jazz. If Novus was originally interested in a British counterpart to their numerous American fusion acts, the group has since matured into a more individual force. Their debut, *Roadside Picnic*, was one of the most insistently playable releases of last year; *For Mad Men Only* sounds strong enough to build comprehensively on that.

"There's a realisation," says Dave O'Higgins, "that you're working for a group rather than an individual performance in the studio. What you're looking at is the overall sound. You spend a certain amount of time on making sure your own performance is good, but that's not what's all-important."

Suitably enough, they're a thoughtful quartet. If they raise hell, it's probably fairly quiet. Mario is the one with the plangent, earnest opinions; John the slightly sceptical one. Mike, like most drummers, saves most of his energy for the kit, rather than for interviews; David, who is probably the most used to this sort of thing, takes a shrewd middle ground.

John: "I'm happy that there's more emphasis on thematic material. One of my difficulties in jazz is that a lot of good tunes are thrown away as an excuse to solo over. I really enjoy the balance between writing and solos."

Dave: "But we're not sticking to structures. In a sense, there's as much improvisation going on at one of our gigs as there is in any of the jazz things we do. But there's an equal amount of composition and structure as well."

Mario: "We always see the piece as a whole. It has to have the same message all the time. The solos strengthen the point of the piece. With every piece, you know how it will start and

what it's going to say. The difficult thing in a live performance is putting the point across. I suppose it's the same as an actor trying to capture a certain spirit."

A philosophy at some odds with the supposed freewheeling of a typical jazz gig. If Roadside have a problem, it's in finding their niche on a circumscribed live circuit. Maybe they're too rock for jazz, too jazz for rock? Or is this sort of catchpenny shorthand more a critic's problem than an audience's?

Mario: "I don't see why we can't play the sort of audiences Andy Sheppard plays to."

Dave: "With rock clubs, people are expecting, if it's something jazzy, they think, well, maybe it's funky, maybe it's Acid Jazz — they think they're going out to dance. With jazz clubs, people know what they like and like what they know, and want us to play stuff that's straight-ahead. We tend to fall between two stools."

John: "But having said that, we do go down very well at jazz venues. We had a fantastic reception when we played at WOMAD. An open-minded audience is always good for us."

They seldom miss out with such audiences. The gig I saw in Paris last year (*Wire* 66) converted a crowd which couldn't have been familiar with any of their music, and the melodic cut of Mario's tunes offers convenient hooks to anyone half-listening. The others write occasionally but John claims his stuff is "Too sugary or TV-theme" to work, while Mike's one attempt "was like a Yellowjackets rip-off and Mario said, this isn't the band's sound at all". Which could be one useful rebuttal to a notion I've heard that Roadside settle too comfortably into a transatlantic fusion groove. If anything, the complexity of Castronari's charts can be a little too unsettling, a little too tied up in smart playing — which is why Smith has such an important role to play in the group. His keyboard colours are the mitigating element in a band sound which might sometimes shatter into virtuosos bits and pieces.

Another difficulty is simple economics. They may have two albums on a major label, but this is not a money-spinning band. They say their commitment to it has cost them all, one way or the other. But while it might be nice to "not be distracted by all those bloody wine bar gigs", the jazz philosophy of taking other jobs persists. Mario says he couldn't think of giving up his other music; Dave opines that that's the stuff that draws a player into jazz in the first place, the ability to sit in with someone and play "Mr P.C." and speak the same language straight away. But it's still worth conjecturing on what achievements might come out of a scene that could do with settling down a bit. Should jazz players pursue the rock group's course of honing and refining one band's music, rather than relying on a vast pool of players who hop from setting to setting?

It will have to stay as conjecture. For now, here is a group of unmistakable intelligence, power, insight, playing a kind of fusion that, in style or not, is among the best things we can go out and hear. ●

For Mad Men Only is reviewed in *Soundcheck* this month.

Charles Mingus

## underdog days One of the most inspiring

*and turbulent personalities in jazz, Charles Mingus – as player and composer – has*

*exercised an enormous influence on the post-war era. In the first of a two-part survey of*

*Mingus on record, Jack Cooke shows his way through the great bassman's early*

*masterpieces on Candid, Atlantic and Impulse.*

"I NEVER realised there were so many places to go and yet so few places to stop and relax" . . . Those are Mingus's words (from that strange autobiographical statement *Beneath The Underdog*, Weidenfeld And Nicholson, 1971) and although the statement was made as part of an attempt to make sense of his own existence, without direct musical reference, it does have relevance to anyone trying to guide someone else through Mingus's recorded legacy.

Not that you can't relax, ever: listening to some of the things from these earlier periods you realise all over again that Mingus put down some of the most tersely beautiful music ever subsumed under the banner of jazz. What keeps you running to catch up is the variety of its sources, the breadth of reference, both internally and externally, and the way in which the music so frequently transcends its own origins. Even when it remains firmly earthbound, it's hard to find it in yourself simply to dismiss it.

But let's begin at the beginning. How about "This Subdues My Passion" by Baron Mingus And His Octet (from 1946 on the 4Star label originally) or "Story Of Love" by (wait for it) Charles 'Barron' (sic) Mingus Presents His Symphonic Airs (on Fenton, 1949)? Pretentious, non? In fact, the music belies the pomposity. "This Subdues" is actually a neat Ellington pastiche, clarinet and alto leading against rich voicing and trilling piano. Yet it reveals also a determination to push against existing boundaries in the intensely difficult part written for trombonist Henry Coker. A rather more radical note is struck when you hear the Symphonic Airs working through "Story Of Love", a rugged, densely-scored item for 20 pieces hinting that it grew out of – and outgrew – "Night In Tunisia".

There's also "Mingus Fingers" (Decca, 1947), written and performed whilst Mingus was one of a two-bass team in Lionel Hampton's orchestra. This too probably wouldn't have existed

without the Gillespie band's "One Bass Hit" to inspire it; nevertheless the flute and muted trumpet voicing in the opening sequences is decidedly original (and reappears again 16 years later on *The Black Saint And The Sinner Lady* [Impulse 1963]). There is already a distinct conceptual grasp, mixing the new (bebop) radicalism with more traditional elements, however uncertainly focused it might yet be.

Mingus spent the period 1949 to 1951 on the road with the Red Norvo Trio, then settled in New York and the following year, along with Max Roach, set up the Debut record label, partly to promote new talent and partly to provide an outlet for more experimental music. What it did above all was allow Mingus to renew his involvement in his own music.

The first fruits of this showed that, having absorbed something of the Ellington orchestra and the Gillespie big band, Mingus was now taking advice from the 'cool school'. An early work for his label, "Precognition" (Debut 1952), features Lee Konitz and cellist George Koutzen in a performance with distinct overtones of Tristano.

During this period Mingus also founded his Jazz Workshop; weekly sessions which enabled a wide range of musicians to get together, trade ideas and performances and learn from each other. In its final phases, around 1954/5, the term became associated more with Mingus's own group, and it is from this period that his first really mature work emerges. "Minor Intrusion" (Period, 1954) has links more to the future than the past – most significantly through the way in which the subject matter and its interpretation combine to create a sustained atmosphere of what can only be called 'collective composing'.

Elsewhere, "Purple Heart" (Savoy, 1954) displays a fluid theme that echoes the kind of lines that emerged from the Konitz/Wayne Marsh/Tristano era, yet also prefigures the long melodic statement of "Reincarnation Of A Love Bird" (Atlantic 1957, Candid 1960) and reinforces the view that Mingus's

CHARLES MINGUS, Boston 1951. Photo by BOB PARENT, from the book *Jazz Giants* (Columbia Books). Reproduced by kind permission of W H Allen.



music didn't just happen, it was the result of a long, intense apprenticeship, and that the emotional floodwaters of his mature work often cover some unlikely intellectual sources.

THAT APPRENTICESHIP clearly was seen to be over when "Pithecanthropus Erectus" (Atlantic 1956) broke upon the world. When I — and others — first heard the astonishing soundscape Mingus draws from the small ensemble (alto, tenor and rhythm) and the degree of control exercised — nobody gets to solo without constant reminders of orchestral purpose — plus what seemed to be the total confidence of the leader that this experiment *would* work, the event seemed to elevate itself from the level of a mere recording to something of the order of a minor miracle.

We weren't entirely aware at that time of its antecedents, patterns of release being what they were in the 1950s. Particularly we didn't know about the Cafe Bohemia session (Debut, 1955) done some months before. But even when you know more about how it came about, "Pithecanthropus" still remains an immense achievement. And the miracles continued . . . *The Clown* (Atlantic 1957) taught us something; *East Coasting* and *Scenes In The City* (both Bethlehem 1957) and *Tijuana Moods* (Victor 1957) taught us a lot more.

Here was a leader producing the material and the concept yet needing specific interpretive voices which both realised and enhanced what the composer had laid out for them — form and content developing into a holistic expressionism that was prepared to risk comparison with any other great moment in music.

What becomes clear also at this stage is the confluence of factors. First, the influence of Ellington, though buried in any direct form, nevertheless still exists in the relish for interpretive voices (for Hodges, Tricky Sam, Bubber or Cootie and Sonny Greer, read Shafi Hadi, Jimmy Knepper, Gene Shaw, Dannie Richmond). Also, the revived spirit of bebop had arrived on the periphery of Mingus's world (cf the Cafe Bohemia set) and had by now been fully taken on board for its clarity of expression — dig the title track of *East Coasting* — resulting in some consistently direct music, whatever the complexities of its form.

By 1959 Mingus had assembled a fresh band based around the saxophonists Booker Ervin and John Handy: for most of its output this cadre was augmented by returnees and co-creators into what, for the space of that year, became a kind of repertory company, including Jackie McLean, Mal Waldron and Willie Dennis from the Bohemia-to-Pithecanthropus era, Hadi (rarely) and Knepper (frequently) from the previous band, plus Jerome Richardson, Don Ellis, Richard Williams, Pepper Adams and Teddy Cohen. Maybe the most significant member of this group was Teo Macero, who was around in the period 1953/5, and now no longer a musician but a producer at Columbia.

Though these orchestral forces were not over-large for any single session they were big enough to offer Mingus the scope both to refine and broaden his musical schemes. Thus the

raucous "Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting" (Atlantic 1959) shows Mingus absorbing — and perhaps in this case contributing to — the fashion for 'soul music'. This is counterpoised by the stringency of "Diane" (Columbia 1959), and, for the first time, a look back, a direct glance at Ellington in the shape of "Things Ain't What They Used To Be" (also Columbia 1959).

But, above all, this period produced one consistently fine album, *Mingus Ah Um* (Columbia 1959). This is just full of gems all the way, from the first version of "Fables Of Faubus" (with the contentious lyrics removed at Macero's insistence, thus highlighting its compositional delights) to the wonderfully controlled "Goodbye Porkpie Hat", (then) the latest in a series of memorials that went back to "Eulogy For Rudy Williams" (Savoy, 1954) and the ingenious anachronisms of "Jelly Roll". I have found nothing in Mingus's work, with the possible exception of *East Coasting*, that matches it as a sustained, consistently creative and well-developed set.

1960 SAW the arrival of Eric Dolphy; by the year-end Mingus was back to a minimal, piano-less quartet, and yet another recording deal. The quartet was essentially an improvising group. On "Folk Forms No 1" or the "Original Fables Of Faubus" there is a degree of ensemble coherence and a distinct compositional overview; on things like "Stormy Weather" (all Candid 1960), despite some moments of ensemble playing clearly crafted by Mingus, it's a soloists' paradise.

In a sense, Mingus came to an impasse here. Ornette, Coltrane and Cecil Taylor had broken the mould open, into a world that unquestionably Mingus had envisaged, yet one that, now it had arrived, he seemed to be ill at ease in. No doubt it had increased his marketability, yet its insistence on the primacy of the soloist denied his composer's instinct. "Vassarelean" (Candid 1960), with a larger ensemble, looks almost longingly — and quite specifically — to "Sombre Intension" (Debut 1954), whilst on the *Mingus Mingus Mingus* album (Impulse 1963) all seven tracks reprise material previously presented in either 1957 or 1959. It seems almost as though Mingus here began to paint in oils what he'd previously sketched with a surer hand on the back of an envelope. The techniques had developed, sure, but ransacking your own back catalogue can also be a sign of failure of inspiration.

My own view is that the danger had gone out of it. Trying to break down convention by absorbing contemporary fashion and testing-to-destruction was Mingus's forte: now that contemporary styles seemed not to have any boundaries there were no conventions to require Mingus's unique combination of chainsaw and scalpel. Increasingly, there was nothing left but to tilt at windmills.

The piano solo album from this time (Impulse 1963) equally clearly seems to signal a retreat. The number of pianists who had passed through the ranks since Mal Waldron called it a day in 1956 adds up to a sizeable total. None of them stayed long (till Jaki Byard arrived in 1963) and one can



draw the conclusion that none of them satisfied Mingus — with the possible exception of Hampton Hawes, who made a lustrous trio set with Mingus and Richmond (Jubilee 1957). Yet here's Mingus doodling away to prove he can do it worse than any of them . . . until he unveils a late classic, "Orange Was The Color Of Her Dress, Then Silk Blues". Here technique doesn't matter; you almost sit beside him as the thing takes shape.

THEN, GOING from one of the most intimate moments in his entire output, and maybe just to prove it wasn't all over, *The Black Saint And The Sinner Lady* (Impulse 1963) offered the extended study that had been for so long implied in Mingus's work. Built almost entirely of orchestral devices laid over thematic fragments, fronted up by Charlie Mariano's brilliant alto, it runs the familiar gauntlet once again, risking its own fragile tensile strength against the improbability of sustaining itself over 39 minutes. It works, but only just, and yet it works precisely because the safety factor is once again below zero.

1964 saw Dolphy back in the band again, for a European tour, where they seemed to be recorded in every town they dropped into. Ironic in view of the dearth of Mingus 'live' recordings up to this point (only *Cafe Bohemia* [Debur 1955] and the *Nonagon Gallery* [United Artists 1959]). When Mingus returned, Dolphy stayed on in Europe, ending his days shortly afterwards. The band's appearance at the Monterey Jazz Festival in September (Jazz Workshop 1964) seemed to mark the end of Mingus the composer and intellectual, and introduce Mingus the jazz act. The lights might be on, but was anybody at home any more?

#### A guide to the records

ONE OF the unpredictable consequences of Mingus's many and varied, frequently one-off, record deals is that a lot of companies have a bit of Mingus, though none have a lot. His refusal to go away has meant that most of his output has been kept in catalogue, though often not on the original labels noted in the text.

Chronologically, then: the 4Star, Fontone and Debur (1952) tracks are all caught up on a *Swingtime* LP (ST 1010) along with other early material which, if you want to understand Mingus, you need to hear.

"Mingus Fingers" came out last on an Affinity LP under Lionel Hampton's name: *In The Bag!* (AFS 1017). The *Period* album is also on Affinity (and needs to be heard): it's under its original title *Abstractions* (Affinity AFF 135). The *Savoy* sides have also survived intact, on SJL 1113, still in the shops and still required listening.

Around this time some things which were clearly originated by Mingus came out under Thad Jones's name on Debur. "Sombre Intrusion" is one of these, collected first on Debur reissues, then on Prestige. Every track is worth attention.

The funny thing about "Pithecanthropus Erectus" is that Atlantic never seems to have liked it. It was deleted quite

quickly after its original release, and now can be found only on various Mingus compilations or as a US import on Atlantic SD 8809.

The earlier 'live' set, recorded by Debur at the Cafe Bohemia, on the other hand, has now been organised into a double-album and a complete set, on Prestige 24010.

*The Clown* is out on Atlantic in facsimile (SD 1260) and so is *Blues And Roots* from 1959 (SD 1305). So for that matter is the later (1961) *Ob Yeah* (SD 1377 or 90667) but I wouldn't give you tuppence for a copy.

Well, what would I suggest you get? Absolutely *East Coasting*, last available as an Affinity LP (AFF 86). Also *Tijuana Mood*, now out on Bluebird as *New Tijuana Moods* as a twofer and CD with alternate takes included (PL 85635[2]). *Scenes In The City* was also an Affinity LP (AFF 105) but Affinity now have a CD under that title which has half the album (and the best bits by the look of it) plus the entire *East Coasting* session. That's got to be good value: the rest of *Scenes* is tacked onto the CD version of the *Period* LP.

The other one that you absolutely shouldn't live without is *Mingus Ah Um*, last available on Columbia/CBS as CBS 21071 though currently out of catalogue as is the other Columbia album from this period, *Mingus Dynasty*, some tracks of which are sometimes seen mixed up with tracks from a 1971 Mingus session.

The *Candid*s are easy: still occasionally seen in facsimile reissue, but if you've got the money go for the Mosaic box set (MR4/MD 3-111: 4LPs or 3CDs from Mosaic Records, 35 Melrose Place, Stamford, Connecticut CT 06902). It's got the lot and more. Affinity also have an album done in 1960, with Eric Dolphy at the Antebes Jazz Festival, on AFF 19.

The Impulse material is being reissued on CD, though I haven't seen the *Mingus Plays Piano* set in this format yet. It would be doubtful if it would justify the expense unless you're a completist anyway. But *Black Saint* (AS 35 254562-2) should be seen as a compulsory purchase.

The Hampton Hawes trio album was reissued on French Vogue as *Jazz Legacy* 500081; it's also now reappearing in facsimile on the original Jubilee label, number 1054 — at a price, of course, but then again few records have rewarded me so much over the years; it has to be on the first choice list.

*Mingus At Monterey* is out on CD; Prestige 98480. Beware, the digital transfer's atrocious — and for my money the music's not much cop either. The Mingus/Dolphy European material from 1964 seems to be available by the ton. All long tracks, so more is maybe better. In that case try the double-album from Amsterdam on Ulysse 50506/507.

And last — a 'live' set done at the Nonagon Gallery in New York in 1959 with Handy, Ervin, Richard Wyands, Mingus and Richmond, came out once on United Artists UAL 4036 (and as a Japanese issue under the same number). To this day it remains submerged in somebody's vaults, un-reissued. It has some truly beautiful music on it and needs to be brought to light again. If you see one, buy it. If you see two, get one for me.



**hulme**

**sweet**

**hulme**

*Nicer mind The Stone Rose -*

*here's the latest bloom of the*

*Manchester underground. Tony*

*Herrington laughs with them,*

*not at them.*

*Photo by Howard Sanley.*

"WITH I'LL Show Harry we were playing complicated, awkward music and we didn't enjoy it. It was too difficult. Playing the same songs over and over again you have to be very stubborn. It gets boring and that's why it's difficult."

"I'm sorry, I disagree completely."

"It's easy to do physically but someone with a bit of intelligence is going to find it hard."

"I could quite easily play the same songs over and over again for years."

"Well, I said someone with a bit of intelligence."

There are five names for me to remember in this flat - Steve Lockhart, Matt Wand, Andi Chapple, Judy Hindle and Rex Caswell (whose easy-going demeanour and lack of front ensure that throughout the two-hour interview he will be on the end of several exchanges similar to the one outlined above). Collectively they are known to an increasing if still select number of people as Those Who Celebrate. A couple of years ago they were known to perhaps an even more selective audience as I'll Show Harry. The progression from performing that group's complicated, awkward, composed music to their currently complex, demanding improvised music was sudden and decisive.

"In 1987 we played two gigs back-to-back at this club in Edinburgh," Steve explains. "The first night we played as I'll Show Harry. The next night we wanted to do something different so we just improvised. We'd already been doing that in rehearsal and thought we'd reached a point where we could unveil it on stage. We enjoyed it and the audience loved us. We decided to throw our songs away and improvise from then on."

This shift in direction was compounded when an Arabic-speaking acquaintance of the group misheard the pronunciation of I'll Show Harry. "She thought we'd said an Arabic phrase that translated as Those Who Celebrate," says Steve. "When *Foed* came out we needed to put a new name on it and in the circumstances that seemed most appropriate."

**F O O D** is Those Who Celebrate's first LP, recorded over two weeks last May and released on the group's own label earlier this year. For reasons of mood, ambience and, no doubt, economics, the recording took place no more than ten minutes' walk from where we are presently sitting, in the marginally infamous Aaben Cinetique in the Hulme area of inner city Manchester.

Hulme has been variously described as a monument to the urban planners of the 1960s and, somewhat dramatically, the most dangerous high-rise estate in the country. It's an appropriate setting for the Aaben, an art-house cinema of singular character whose in-house hearing system consists of a three-bar electric fire in the front stalls and where films are screened depending on the number of people that turn up to view them. Perhaps this unique recording location accounts for the character of much of the music on *Foed*, which arrives as if from the recesses of some cavernous hall either in rebarbative bursts of noise or as microtones suspended in silence. Typical

of the moment, it's a composite, multi-directional sound, one which can be suggestive of the early recordings of Derek Bailey, the frozen soundscapes of The Cocteau Twins or the combination of art terrorism, free jazz and progressive rock that characterised the quintessentially English music of This Heat and Henry Cow.

"We all listen to a wide variety of music," Andi says, perhaps unnecessarily, "and one of the good things about the kind of stuff we play now is that everything we listen to and can comprehend can have an effect on it. We were always aware that the music was able to accommodate anything we wanted it to."

"But that did give rise to certain problems at first," he continues. "For instance, we realised that we didn't have a vocabulary for talking about what we were doing or a way of organising the different elements that we wanted to work in."

"So what we do now is impose structures on the music," adds Matt. "All the playing is improvised but we'll be working off a series of cues or a list of combinations. There are guidelines designed to highlight certain aspects of the music. All the things we've done recently that have been successful have worked on that idea of freedom within rules. So the way we approach it now is that we're able to do what we like but with certain conditions."

For the last six months several members of Those Who Celebrate have been doing what they like within the decidedly uncertain conditions of concert promotion, hosting a series of remarkably successful performances in and around central Manchester, featuring the likes of Derek Bailey, The Modum Quartet, The Masters Of Disorientation and Phil Wachsmann. In the process they have established a niche for improvised music in what was previously a barren territory and plugged in to a self-supporting national network of sympathetic groups and musicians whose existence they regard as essential in sustaining their own present enthusiasm and momentum.

Those Who Celebrate, their activities reveal, do not regard themselves as an exclusively musical entity. For the release of *Foed*, for instance, they have produced an accompanying booklet full of found images and declamatory, free associative, stream-of-consciousness prose poems. It's familiar stuff, the kind of thing that has been mistaken for subversive literature ever since the 1960s. Taken alongside their exacting music and the rather forbidding films that occasionally accompany the group's performances, such an artefact suggests that they have no desire to comply with the traditional functions of print, music and cinema and the roles they play in most people's day-to-day lives.

It's refreshing, then, to discover that the group has something of a populist attitude to offset such self-defeatingly marginal strategies.

"What entertains us most about what we do is that it entertains other people," says Steve.

"Basically we want to get to the stage where the audience is laughing all the time we're playing," adds Andi.

"Laughing with us, that is. Not at us."



## *call it musique* How the

pianist from France turned to America, turned on Charles Lloyd

and turned away from blabbermouths. Report by Brian Priestley.

Photo by Jenny Anderson.

"I TRIED, with all my modesty, to make a small statement that I don't want to be stamped on my forehead: 'Jazz Musician'. I like so many different kinds of music that, my record, I want it to be a little bit of that. I said, 'Why don't we call it *Musiq*? It's also an international name. Everybody in every language, they say 'music' for music, and it's short and fast and it really says what it is - I'm playing some music here, I'm not a jazz specialist."

Well, you could have fooled me. This is Michel Petrucciani, talking with some residual rhythms from his own first language, French, but coming across as a very positive-sounding adopted American peddling his wares. Discussing anyone's new album (on Blue Note, see *Wire* 74) is often a good way into an interview, which in this case turns out to be about jazz, not about Michel's other musical tastes. For, despite the emphasis on Latin beats and the discreet use of synthesiser, *Musiq* is not the sell-out that Michel makes it seem, and he is self-aware enough to see through his own sales-pitch.

"On this particular album I wrote a lot of different tunes with different ideas in mind, and I called people that I thought would be able to play that tune better than other people. So Lenny [White] was great for the Brazilian feel and the funk feel. And Anthony Jackson . . . Usually the way I write is, I have the same machine as yours and I put it on the piano and, if there is a phrase or a chord or something that stands out of the rest of what I'm doing, I stop the machine. There's something that you get used to hearing after a while, it sounds like the beginning of a tune. I think of myself as a melodic player; even when I play fast, it's phrases that you could really



hear every note. I don't like to blabber (*imitates baby talk and random finger movements*) because playing like that is playing technically, and I like to feel what I play. I think every note."

MICHEL'S READY grin signals his recognition that he's just committed another interview cliché, but then he shrugs off the feeling because he meant it anyway. But what about the use of synth, first on the April 1989 album and now in his touring quartet?

"The idea came because I wanted to play in a big-band format. And I thought of synthesiser to recreate that big-band environment, in terms of just, er, hugging the piano. But you have two keyboard players, one is the leader and the other one just comps, and it's a difficult situation in terms of ego and relationships, you know."

Petrucciani was clearly happy with Adam Holzman, who had introduced himself some three years ago to show his transcriptions of Michel's recorded solos, and recently left Miles Davis to tour with Michel. Was the careful mixing of recording levels hard to reproduce on tour?

"The level, in terms of the hugging, is exactly like that on stage also, it's not too overpowering. Because it's very dangerous, the acoustic piano has its own limits. If you play too loud, you drown the sound of the acoustic piano. You sound like Marcel Marceau," and Michel mimes the famous mime-artist playing silent keyboard.

PETRUCCIANI'S OWN study of recorded solos (Oscar Peterson and Erroll Garner) began at a young age, during his ten years of European classical music, which he finally gave up for a variety of reasons. "My teacher was very proud of me. What happened was that she used to show me around, and it got to be too much for me. I said, she's using me and I don't feel comfortable, and that's the reason my mom let me quit."

But there was already jazz-influenced music in the family, for Michel's father played guitar and led a family band. "My father put all the three children to work, one on piano, one on guitar, one on bass." So Michel was good and ready when Clark Terry came through France to work with local musicians.

"They were looking for a piano player, and the guy said Well, I think the best piano player in town — and it was a small town — is Michel. And Clark said, OK, well, call him up. So they called me up, and they said — but one thing we forgot to tell you, Michel is 11 years old! We played together and it was great, I got drunk the first time that night with Clark Terry. After playing, of course."

It took two more Americans to put Michel firmly on the international stage. Former Lennie Tristano drummer Tox Drohar spent time in the mid-1970s with the Petrucciani's family band and then returned to California, repeatedly inviting Michel to visit.

"When I turned 18 I said to my parents, I'd like to go to the United States, and Tox was living at Charles Lloyd's house. I

didn't even know who Charles Lloyd was. In fact Charles didn't even want me at his house, it was like, guests start to smell like fish after three days. One day he said, what do you do? So I said, I try to play piano. Well, why don't you play something? I played, and he left. I looked around and said, Oh man, I must have bored him to death. And he went down to the cave to get his saxophone and he came out playing, and we played all night. He said, OK, I really want to go back out on the scene, but I want you to be in the band."

Of course he did and he was, which led to two albums for American labels but recorded in Europe. So too was the remarkable Montreux 1986 set, released as *Power Of Three* (Blue Note), in which the by-then regular duo of Petrucciani and guitarist Jim Hall was joined by Wayne Shorter.

"We rehearsed a day, just to get Wayne into what we were doing. There's a tune called 'Bimini', that's Jim's tune and it's kind of a calypso thing. And Wayne looked at the music he was rehearsing and then he said, Well, when the drummer and the bass player will come, it'll be easier for me because I'll hear where "one" is. And Jim and myself looked at Wayne and we said, Wayne, ain't gonna be a bass player or a drummer! He said, Oh. OK.

"It's important to be working with people you idolise, because I did idolise Wayne, I did idolise Jim Hall. I idolised Roy Haynes [the drummer on *Michel Plays Petrucciani*] and all of a sudden you're with him. It's like when I was with Freddie Hubbard five years ago, it was Joe Henderson, Billy Hart, Buster Williams and Freddie Hubbard. To be on the stage, I was pinching myself every day." It was also deeply significant for Michel to do duo work with Hall and to be aware of Hall's duos with Bill Evans, another idol. "I used to tell him, Call me Bill, and he said, Nah, you're not like Bill Evans. You don't sound like Bill Evans. There was only one Bill Evans."

If you talk of direct influence, Michel prefers to name Wes Montgomery. "I think if you listen to my phrasing and you put a guitar sound on it, you'll hear a lot of Wes." Certainly a highly melodic player, but then so is Keith Jarrett. "I love his music, but I feel that Keith is like a very, er, sugary cake. If I eat too much of it, it's gonna make me throw up." And as for hornmen, "One person I think of when I play, especially ballads, is Miles. He stops playing but the note keeps moving forward. That's one of the reasons why I hit the keys very hard, and let it ring. I always think of that old trumpeter style, like Louis Armstrong."

Recalling that one of Armstrong's first triumphs was over his vastly under-privileged background, it seems to me that Michel's triumph over physical deformity has bestowed on him an equally sunny disposition. To crown everything, he expects during May to become a father. He isn't sounding a sour note, but one of realism, when he says, "I don't want my child to become a musician. Either you're very famous and it's OK, otherwise it's a very difficult job. Always playing for a small crowd and very little money. There is no middle state. But it's difficult also to tell people not to do that because, when you have the passion, you have the passion."

soundcheck



SERGEI KURYOKHIN: Russian jazz-in-the-box. Photo by MEL YATES.



★

In this month's Soundcheck: **a Count.**

**a Duke,**

**some Leaders,**

**a Freeman**

*& a regular Guy Plus: Cassandra Wilson, Andy Sheppard, Rudolph Ponce, John Cage.*



# CASSANDRA WILSON

JUMPWORLD  
(JMT 834434)

Recorded: Brooklyn, July–August 1989.

*Woman On The Edge; Domination Switch; Phase Jump; Live; Grand System Masters; Jump World; Love Phases Domination; Whirlwind Soldiers; Warm Spot; Dancing In Dream Time; Rock This Calling.*

Graham Haynes (t); Robin Eubanks (tb), Gary Thomas (ts); Steve Coleman, Greg Osby (as), Rod Williams (aj); David Gilmore (g); Lonnie Plazacco, Kevin Bruce Harris (b); Mark Johnson (d); Cassandra Wilson (v); James Moore (rap). (Collective personnel.)

A NUMBER of notable attractions here. First, the ensembles: one of the most valuable things about the M-BASE team seems to me to be their clanish approach. This nucleus of players is getting to know each member's skills well enough to build a repertory of genuine insight. It has to be better than calling in session players and uncommitted star guests to fill out the session-list.

The sound of the record is agreeable, too — a soft focus which suits Wilson's ambiguous voice. If someone had tried a hard-rap sort of production, it would have betrayed the singer's talents. There is enough relaxed space for the horns to make interesting statements, none of the songs are allowed to outstay their welcome and as a record it stands as an accomplished set.

Here comes the criticism. What does Wilson want to do? *Jumpworld* is very engaging but it's hardly ever exciting. James Moore's rap on the title track would be laughed off the mike by any leading MC, and the macho sledgehammer by Bruce Lincoln seems somewhat at odds with the rather considered tone of the music on the record. Given that Wilson's voice is primarily suited to ballad singing, the up-tempo material here has been sensibly scaled-down so as not to overwhelm her. But it lends a song such as "Domination Switch" a slightly eerie quality — the lyric speaks of militant rejection and its setting is a drifting, elusive sort of modal funk.

Mood music, perhaps, for armchair radicals? It would be a spoilsport suggestion to say that her previous set, the utterly bewitching *Blue Skies*, was in its way a more radical outing, an interpretation of standards which put a remarkable new spin on music we thought we knew well. Wilson's songs here are mostly trading in literate niceness — it might be more

"advanced" stuff, but it misses the crunching vitality of rap. A record you should hear, but don't expect the future now.

MIKE FISHER

# ANDY SHEPPARD SOFT ON THE INSIDE (Antilles AN 8751)

*Soft On The Inside; Rebecca's Silk Stockings; Carla, Carla, Carla; Adventures In The Rave Trade; Claude Deppa (t, perc); Kevin Robinson (tr, fltn, perc); Gary Valente (tb); Andy Sheppard, Chris Boscoe, Pete Hunt (reeds); Dave Buxton (key); Steve Lodder (syn); Mano Ventura (g); Orphy Robinson (vib); Ernst Reijpger (clo); Pete Macfield (b); Han Bennink, Simon Gore (d); Mamadi Karama (perc).*

# CURTIS CLARK LIVE AT THE BIMHUIS



# (Nimbus NS 505 C)

Recorded: October 1988

*Reincarnation Of Biggie Thomas, With A Little Help From My Friends, Bon-Retard, Dog-Sit Driver, At Time Goo By, Special Delivery, Strings Of Ecstasy, Boogie Stomp, Cosmic Minstrel.*

Clark (p), Andy Sheppard (tr, ss), Ernst Reijpger (clo); Ernst Glerum (b); Louis Moholo (d)

*Soft On The Inside* is a big-band recording. It's a kaleidoscopic, multi-referential work that makes allusions to most of the ideas that have been buzzing around in jazz over the last five years. Unlike many big-band records, its four long tracks don't sound like a succession of riffs in search of an imagination. Instead they emerge as perfectly rounded pieces of music; one idea feeding off another, the various elements manipulated with craftsman-like precision, a sense of the music evolving to a natural

resolution.

*Live At The Bimhuis*, by contrast, is an ad hoc small group session. Although most of its nine tracks comply specifically with that area of contemporary jazz where the balm of tradition rubs up against the shock of the new, the music sounds like a series of directionless solos in search of a context. Most of its intricate themes are handled with a sure touch, so it can't be through lack of rehearsal that the music is often characterised by an air of collective conjecture and vacillation.

One of its tracks is dedicated to Django Reinhardt. A brief highlight of *Soft On The Inside* is an acoustic guitar solo that manages to accommodate Reinhardt's influence within the techniques of free improvisation. It's one of the few instances on the record that doesn't make a significant reference to the music of Carla Bley. Significant, because in its use of Latin rhythms, parodic touches and the deployment of synthesizers and voices in a textural capacity to offset the more conventional colourings of the horns, *Soft On The Inside* draws direct inspiration from Bley's own recent big band compositions.

Likewise, the music on *Bimhuis* borrows freely from European improvisation and the combination of freedom, poise and sophistication that details David Murray's current approach. Unlike *Soft On The Inside*, however, it fails to make any headway on these blueprints and as a consequence lacks any real sense of direction or identity of its own.

TONY HERRINGTON

# EVIDENCE GOLDEN ROAD (Un-numbered cassette)

Recorded: no details, but probably 1989.

*Later, The Slinging City, Golden Road, Salsa Different, End Of The Road, Knoch.*

Roland Perrin (ky), Jeremy Shoham (ss, as), Paul Taylor (tr), Rex Bolton (g), Phil Scragg (b); Chris Perry (d); Gary Hammond (perc).

"Jazz is just a feeling" . . . that's Roland Perrin quoting Lennie Tristano to John Fordham in *Wire* 51. The sort of aphorism you have to think about if you're going to deal with it. But when he says — and although two years have passed it still applies to the wondrously eclectic set he's put together here — "I suppose I'm part of a reactionary trend", I suspect a bit of understatement, even maybe misapprehen-





son. There's a genuinely lively intelligence here, matched to a thoroughly lively band. A wide range of sources, but what's wrong with that?

"Later" is an exciting soul/funk outing, developed with precision and a sense of humour which indicates a fairly sophisticated conceptual grasp: "Sleeping City" has some moody synth and guitar and a simple, declarative theme. It sounds for all the world like Carla Bley rehearsing a successor to the Sextet. "Golden Road" is something of a late-swing derivative, with some hedge-hopping clarinet, trombone out of Vic Dickenson, piano somewhere around Art Hodes, before a brief endgame that owes more to the Weill/Brecht school. Well, you can't say they don't cast their net wide.

"Salsa Diferente" is just about what the title indicates, with the feeling that if they'd have been offered Machito's brass section they'd have written them in too. The trombone here gets into Roswell Rudd/Gary Valente mode. "End Of The Road" has a fluid theme, flowing piano and bass work with some of the tremulous insistence that Jaco Pastorius used to possess; again, it has certain of the properties of Carla Bley's writing. "Kinacho" is the apache-dance finale, led by accordion sounds and set to a 6/8 gallop tempo, with some spiky alto and bravura percussion.

A question remains: wouldn't anybody take a chance on getting this enjoyable set out on LP/CD? If not, what's the world coming to?

JACK COOKE

*Golden Road* is available from Garden Flat, 102 Jerminham Rd, London SE14 5NW. Price £6.50 (inc p&hp).

## THE LEADERS

### UNFORESEEN BLESSINGS (Black Saint 120 129 1)

Recorded: New York, 10 & 11 January, 1989.  
*In A Minute, Hip Drifter, Sun Precondition Five, The Search, Lightish, Sun Precondition Six, Postmaker, Wait A Minute, Agadir, Hanes Dance, Now A Moment, Lucie, Blueberry Hill.*  
Lester Bowie (t); Arthur Blythe (as); Chico Freeman (ts, ss, bc); Kirk Lightsey (p); Cecil McBee (b); Don Moye (d).

## BRAINSTORM

### THE MYSTICAL DREAMER (In & Out 7006 2)

Recorded: Paris, 16th May, 1989.

*Footprints, Did I Say Anything, Prelude, On The Nile, Sojourn, The Mystical Dreamer, I'll Be There, Did I Say Anything.*

Chico Freeman (ts, ss, p); Delmar Brown (ky, v); Chris Walker (b, ky, v); Archie Walker (d, ky); Noeman Hedman (perc).

CHICO FREEMAN's ability to combine the subversive edge and contempt for fixed form he learned at AACM with a vigorously uncompromised commercial appeal is almost unique in his generation of (native) Chicago players. He has become a staggeringly accomplished performer, closer to Shorter than to anyone else of that stature, and by virtue of his studiously cool impersonality rather more than for any more obvious stylistic debt.

Brainstorm are sufficiently like mid-period, pre-disco Weather Report to clinch the re-



semblance. Freeman and his keyboard collaborator Delmar Brown write their tunes from the bottom up, settling them in the kind of adamant groundbass that made Zawinul such a compelling voice. All the other components are there, rather more self-consciously: unison voices, bass harmonics, asymmetrically-voiced chords, strong ostinato statements in the horns.

Freeman isn't one of your cathartic players; if he has a vice, it may be an excess of control. Where "Sojourn" is circularly breathless, pitchriden, too unostentatious in its brief virtuosity, "On The Nile" and the title track are near-perfect blends of rhythmic subtlety and strong harmonic conception, ably led from the front. Shorter's "Footprints" kicks off the set strongly enough without getting anywhere

fast and gives an unnerving impression of following itself in a circle.

That also seems to have happened to Arthur Blythe who, at 50, seems to be going exactly nowhere, and who hasn't managed to reconcile what always promised, in his stint alongside Freeman with India Navigation, with big-lunch label pressures at Columbia. *Lenox Avenue Breakdown* was a small masterpiece, but since 1980, it just hasn't been happening for Blythe. Freeman doesn't sound that comfortable to me in *The Leaders*, who're too much of an every-which-way act to narrow his aim as he seems to need.

The brief prefiguring of "Did I Say Anything" on *Mystical Dreamer* becomes an irritating tic on the *Leaders* set, which is punctuated with half-a-dozen miniatures, largely from Lightsey, who's developing into an impressive writer, but also from Freeman on "The Search". The set ends with a version of "Blueberry Hill" which is pure Brass Fantasy compote, Blythe calling the shots.

Where *Unforeseen Blessings* sounds dangerously unfocused, *Mystical Dreamer* has a sharp sense of its own destiny and direction. It's the kind of album the critically unsold Grover Washington used to make before he started listening to the wrong advice. The *Leaders* may set the club roof alight, but it's Brainstorm that will be doing turntable encores.

BRIAN MORTON

## ROADSIDE PICNIC FOR MAD MEN ONLY (Novus PL 74581)

Recorded: December 1989  
*Sometimes I Feel So Very Sad; For Madmen Only; Lonely Wolf; The Presentation; Song For Elaine; No Black; Victoria Park Forever; The Visitation; Stone At The Beach.*  
Dave O'Higgins (ts, ss, wind syn); John G Smith (ky); Mario Gastonari (b); Mike Bradley (d, sequencer, samples).

ROADSIDE PICNIC's second album offers much the same mixture of energy, intelligence and bombast as their first. They're all great players and the interplay of electronic and acoustic instruments is as engaging as ever (the whole LP sounds best on headphones, in fact) but compositionally it remains fussy: clever spaces are found for improvisation but it takes time for any of this material to lodge in the mind.

The exception is "Lonely Wolf", the exactly



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contemplative track, where O'Higgins's soprano states a charmingly simplistic theme and Smith turns in one of his best solos — cooing, as he does throughout the album, some perfectly-judged effects from his hardware. Beneath all this, Castronari layers a rolling ostinato pattern in some tricky time signature. His voice is always versatile and articulate here: who'd have thought that the double bass would end up finding such a comfortable home for itself in the techno-fusion of bands like Roadside Picnic and Earthworks?

The comparison with Earthworks is inevitable: O'Higgins has bravely gone on record as saying that he grew up listening to Genesis and King Crimson (*Wired*, 58/9), but oddly enough it's Bruford who's been more successful at leaving that influence behind. For instance, the elaborate mood changes of "Steve At The Beach" don't seem to have any particular rationale: a pulse-quickening fast section with some superb overdubbed sax licks shades abruptly into a quickly marching passage, swash with Mahlerian harmonies and lush string sounds. John Zorn could have got away with it but these guys don't have the cheek: you're left with the sneaking suspicion that there has to be some private programmatic subtext behind it all.

As a rule, the simpler and more upfront they keep it, the better it sounds. "No Blues" is a nice hard-hitting dance number which allows O'Higgins (backed up by some funky acoustic piano) to come into his own: he sounds much happier blowing his top in this kind of context than when having to carry all those lengthy anthemic tunes. The formal strictures of this music seem both to constrain and liberate him in a way which reminded me of Elton Dean's work with In Caboots. But Roadside Picnic, for all their virtues, have yet to sound as good as that underrated outfit when it comes to marching brains with guts.

JONATHAN COE

# SONNY SHARROCK BAND LIVE IN NEW YORK (Enemy 108)

Recorded, New York, 14 July 1989.  
*Dick Dags*; *Heroin Dams*; *Elvis's Blues*; *Princess Sonnets*;  
*My Song*; *The Past Adventures Of Zylphie Honey Cup*;  
*Money Honey*;  
Sonny Sharrock (g); Melvin Gibbs (b); Pharoan Akkafi; Abe Speller (d); Dave Snyder (ky); Ron "The Buzgilar" Castel (vn).

## MACHINE GUN

### OPEN FIRE (MU New York 1003)

Recorded, New York, 1989.  
*In The Beginning*; *A Salton's Last Stand*; *Pentagon*; *Get The Gun*; *See Africa*; *Brass Tactics*; *Revolution*; *Arsenal Tech High*; *Monks Sir*; *Obsession And Obscurity*; *Take No Prisoners*; *Maffly Fools French*; *Road Worthing*; *Chalun*.  
Thomas "Rage" Chapin (sax, f); Robert Musso (g, six-string b); Bill Bryant (d); Just-Rohm Parker Wells (b); John Richey (v oc-ups, tapes); Sonny Sharrock (g); on *Arsenal Tech High*, *Monks Sir*, and *Obsession And Obscurity* only.

ROCK REVIVAL anyone? It was Miles who first introduced the dynamics of rock into jazz, followed by McLaughlin, Soft Machine, Weather Report and Nucleus. Later Ornette, alongside Blood Ulfers and Shannon Jackson,



twisted rock into his own crazy shapes. And now, in the wake of Last Exit, Power Tools and Zorn's Naked City, a new movement has shoved itself into focus — rockist jazz, which takes not only aspects of rock but the overall sound and dynamic. Sharrock's album is a good example; he has moved away from jazz/creative music and this is basically a straight rock/rhythm and blues workout complete with rock 'n' roll vocals which sometimes sound unsettlingly like Robert Plant. It's very tight, has a nice tune or two ("Herbie's Dance", "My Song"), one or two neat solos and a fair amount of dross. I can live with it but I'd be hard pressed to love it. . . .

Sharrock also features on three tracks on Machine Gun's second album, which like the first very clearly takes Last Exit's amazing point of fusion between free jazz and heavy

metal as its point of departure. They have a great guitarist in Robert Musso and it's all very loud and right-between-the-eyes. At their best ("Pentagon", "Arsenal Tech High") they do have moments of clarity but there is so little genuine listening, interaction or response that these occasional points of focus quickly get swallowed up into a porridge of sound; "complications without consequences" as Theodore Adorno once put it.

It sounds like the echo of pure fashion, calculation posing as insanity, order posing as chaos — a stereotypical parody of intensity, feeling and expression, its relentless nervous activity disguising a stasis in which nothing ever happens. They have also taken on board the rockist pose (you know the imagery; teeth gritted boys-gang with penis-guitars who snort Harpic and drink battery acid for breakfast), even to the extent of their militaristic name and its macho gun/prick/murder/rape symbolism. I thought punk had killed off all that stuff long ago.

RICHARD SCOTT

## THE MANDALA OCTET THE NOTION OF OBSTACLE (Volition 101)

Recorded New York & Boston, February, April & May 1989  
*(We'd Better Build An Ark) It's Raining*; *The Nation Of Obstacles*; *The Eyes Of An Altruist*; *Thought Criminal*; *Tom Duprey* (c); *Curtis Hasselbring* (tbn); *Lisa Villaverde*; *Oliver Hequet*; *Charlie Kohlman* (trch); *Pandelis Karageorgis* or *John Medeski* (p); *John Leaman* (b, comp); *Jim Black* (d); *Harvey Sorgen* (perc).

This is The Mandala Octet's first recording. It contains some of the best music that you'll hear this month as well as some of the worst. It has nothing whatsoever to do with noise, volume, velocity, the rediscovery of Jimi Hendrix or the re-evaluation of Vanilla Fudge. The Return To Rock ethos that currently grips the majority of its contemporaries in New York City's downtown avant-garde is obviously lost on The Mandala Octet. This is reason enough for welcoming their presence.

If it had only contained a loop of the opening few minutes of "It's Raining" then *The Nation Of Obstacles* would already be sitting at the top of my end of year list. The introductory piano/bass wamp has a keen sense of yearning to



it that is pleasantly affecting and the voicing of the horns is truly an inspiration. The solo passages that follow, however, are underpinned by some of the worst drumming I have ever heard and sound neolithic in comparison.

Did I say there was no place for a little rock 'n' roll excess in The Mandala Octet's music? Perhaps I was being too hasty. In varying degrees all four tracks cover similar territory to the latter-day recordings of George Russell and Gil Evans. That's to say they combine the dynamics and rhythmic stasis of rock with elements drawn from big band writing, hard bop, free jazz, even the West Coast Latin funk of Airtio Moreira and Raul De Souza. This means that I enjoy them only in parts. "The Notion Of Obstacle", for instance, is OK for the tactual solos of Tom Dupey and Curtis Hasselbring and the way it sustains a coherent mood throughout a succession of styles, but the sections where it tries to come across all hard and funky sound forced and inelegant. I also pass on much of "Thought Criminal", although once again the introduction has a certain vaporous quality that sets it apart from the rest of the piece. "The Eyes Of An Altruist" I find neither visionary nor beneficent, but then this is also true of much contemporary jazz. You, of course, may care to disagree.

TONY HERRINGTON

# MARCUS ROBERTS DEEP IN THE SHED (NOVUS PL 83078)

Recorded: Aurora and New Orleans, August-December 1989  
*Nebuchadnezzar; Spiritual Awakening; The Governor; Deep In The Shed; Myrtales Interlude; E Dankworth.*  
Marcus Roberts (p); Herb Harris (ts); Toddy Williams (tr); Wesel Anderson (ss); Scooter Barnhard (s); E Dankworth (t); Wycliffe Gordon (tb); Reginald Veal (b); Herlin Riley (d, perc); Maurice Carnes (d). (Collective personnel.)

WITH THE release of his second solo album it becomes less and less appropriate to talk of Roberts as "Wynton Marsalis's pianist", but the critical clichés associated with Marsalis aren't easy to shake off. You know how these arguments go - too reverential, too cerebral, Jazz as Museum, etc - so I won't repeat them at length: but neither is it possible, on the basis of this intensely reverential and cerebral album, to refute them.

"The shed", of course, is the woodshed, that

cloister to which all young musicians must retreat in order to "devote oneself to serious study and practice" (as the sleeve note puts it). This is the scholastic, or even monastic, context in which Roberts has fashioned an album on blues form. Within that framework there's a neatly calculated spread of styles, from the Middle-Easternish "Nebuchadnezzar" to the relative directness of "Spiritual Awakening", which pays muted homage to Mahalia Jackson.

What can you say? This is absorbing and thoughtful music but it's so stifled by its own politeness that it manages to add nothing very new to the tradition which it presumes to continue. The pieces are beautifully orchestrated and Roberts's solos combine a keen attention to form with a curious timidity about surrendering to Monkish dissonance. To be



honest, when I see Stanley Crouch describing this music as being "fiercely swinging" and having "gutbucket directness" I wonder whether I've been given a copy of the right album.

JONATHAN COE

# JOHN CAGE THE COMPLETE STRING QUARTETS, Vol 1 (Mode CD 17)

Recorded: Connecticut, 27 February 1988.  
*Music For Four (1987); Thirty Pairs For String Quartet (1983).*  
Audiart Quartet.

MOST OF Cage's works have involved exotic or unusual instruments, ranging from tin cans and amplified coils of wire to the famous

"prepared piano", in which nuts, bolts and other objects are inserted between the strings. When Cage adopts a more conventional instrumentation - as in the "String Quartets" - the results are no less unorthodox.

In both "Music For Four" and "Thirty Pieces" he asks the players to rehearse, not as an ensemble, but individually, and to perform the music, not in the usual quartet position, but widely separated in space. The spatial separation of players reflects Cage's interest in creating "a multiplicity which is characteristic of nature" and enables listeners to choose their own points of focus within the complex web of sound.

In both works Cage has used chance operations in order to transcend the limitations of his own ego and personal taste and to examine instrumental sound in microscopic detail. The timbre of the strings is shattered into finely differentiated qualities of attack, decay, vibrato and resonance. The listener accustomed to tempered scales and uniform timbres may miss these nuances or take them for incidental effects but they are the very substance of the music - the degrees of differentiation are limitless. All of these fine details are determined by chance and are then notated with precision.

Although all the musical detail is specified the players are allowed an element of choice. In "Thirty Pieces" each player has a series of 30 short, contrasting solos which are unrelated to the other instrumental parts and within specified limits players can decide when to begin and end each piece. In "Music For Four" they are given the choice of how to space out the music within given time brackets and can also decide the durations of silences.

Cage has commented that the music's flexibility of structure makes it "earthquake-proof". However, this analogy also captures the salient qualities projected by this music: those of calm, tranquility and immense spaciousness.

ROGER SUTHERLAND

# UZEB UZEB CLUB (Cream 210)

Recorded: Montreal, September 1989.  
*Uzbek Club; Not Even The Shadow Of A Tail Of A Lizard; Mister Mac; Perrier Cries; Time To Go; Bawler.*  
Michel Cusson (g); Alain Caron (b), Paul Prochu (d).



New fusions in several fashionable faces. UZEB are a Canadian trio who played in London last month, though not in time for your reviewer to have heard them. On record, they play a clean, expertly-honed amalgam of Merthens and McLaughlin, with a few technolicks of their own. Caron and Prochu are a polished rhythm section, filling gaps and supplying propulsion without taking much limelight away from Cusson, whose choice of pedals or FX switches seems to be what ultimately dictates the mood of each piece.

He gets an attractive electro-acoustic sound on some tracks, a more mundane fuzz-rock timbre on others, and predictably it's the moody, washes-of-sound stuff which appeals most. "Pierrier Citron", for instance, sounds, er, lemony and full of sparkle, while "Bouncer" is short and mean-sounding. The studio sound is a bit bright but they secure a very full-bodied presence: I'm reviewing on LP, and the digital crunch of CD should put it in the demonstration bracket.

Nothing to knock you over, perhaps, but it might satisfy big guitar followers until the next Merthens.

MIKE FISH

## COUNT BASIE/TONY BENNETT

**BASIE SWINGS BENNETT SINGS**

(Roulette 793899/CD & LP)

Recorded: New York, 3 & 5 January 1959.

*Life Is A Song, With Plenty Of Money And You, Jupiter Creepers, Art You Have? Any Fun, Anything Goo, Strike Up The Band, Chicago, I've Grown Accustomed To Her Face, Poor Little Rich Girl, Growing Pains, I Guess I'll Have To Change My Plan, After Supper.*  
Bennett (v); with Thad Jones, Snooky Young, Wendell Cantley, Joe Newman (t), Henry Coker, Al Grey, Benny Powell (db); Marshall Royal, Frank West, Frank Foster, Billy Mitchell, Charles Fowlkes (saxes); Count Basie, Ralph Shanon (p); Freddie Green (g); Eddie Jones (b); Sonny Payne (d).

## TONY BENNETT

**ASTORIA: PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST**

(CBS 466005)

Recorded: Astoria, NY, 16-18 May 1989.

*Where Do The Bells Ring For Me, I Was Lost, I Was Drifting, A Little Street Where Old Friends Meet, The Girl I Love, It's Like Reaching For The Moon, Speak Low, The Fuku Who Love On The Hill, Astoria, A Weaver Of Dreams/There Will Never Be Another You, Body And Soul, Where Do You Go From Love, The Boulevard Of Broken Dreams, Where Did The Magic Go,*

*I've Come Home Again.*

Bennett (v); with Ralph Shanon (p), Paul Langosch (b); Joe LaBarbera (d); and The UK Orchestra Ltd.

A big, hearty guy, a former singing waiter, Tony Bennett is the local boy made good. Like Frank Sinatra, he grew up in a suburb of New York – in Bennett's case, Queens. *Astoria* is a quasi-autobiographical telling of his growing pains, although "Growing Pains" is on the CD reissue of his session with Basie. Since the Count only plays on a couple of tracks, he might have seen this as just another accompaniment-chore, like his sessions with Kay Starr or Francis Albert himself, but Bennett obviously relished the opportunity. The vocalist opens up the swingers with huge, gusting power: "Chicago" and "Strike Up The Band" are imperiously delivered, yet he always seems to have space to settle back and wait for



the beat. "I've Grown Accustomed" is a rather too urbane song for such a plain-speaking singer, but he elicits a simple tenderness from it which is surprising; "After Supper", previously unissued, is a charming inventory of images ("all the crickets are a-chirping") nailed by Basie's men in their beat soft-shoe guise. The only problem here is Noel Coward's almost unsingable lyric for "Poor Little Rich Girl".

At 62, when he made *Astoria*, Bennett has grown huskier and heavier in his delivery – the beautiful bel canto sound of his early records has inevitably worn away, and it's more moving because the LP is concerned with his experiences growing up. Yet he handles the problems of an ageing voice with discretion and grace. The lazily swinging tempo of "A Little Street" is lazier but just as swinging; the big top notes on climaxes are attacked and

secured without making one wince.

American singers tend to take on mid-life notebooks such as this – the precedents can be traced back to *Satchmo: A Musical Autobiography* and Sinatra's *September Of My Years* and *Trilogy*. Bennett, though, has mixed standards with new songs and some lovely rarities – Bronislau Kaper's "I Was Lost" and "a song I heard Carmen McRae sing", "It's Like Reaching For The Moon". He goes out on a bruisingly sentimental note with "I've Come Home Again", but, well, I'm too much of a Bennett believer not to be rooting for him all the way.

RICHARD COOK

## KEITH TIPPETT

**MUSICIAN III (AUGUST AIR)**

(FMP CD 12)

Recorded: Berlin, 25 and 26 June 1987.

*I Love You, Julie, August Air.*

Keith Tippett (solo piano, woodblocks).

FERRUCCIO BUSONI thought that everything was possible on the piano "even when it seems impossible to you, or really is so". Eight years later, he was writing to his beloved Gerda, "I scarcely play with my hands any more."

Much of what Keith Tippett has coaxed from Bechtrains and Bosendorfers over the past two decades seems impossible, but all of it is a demonstration that anything is possible if you take Schumann's advice and think in terms of scores rather than virtuosity. Over the years, Tippett has consistently insisted that we redirect our attention away from the technicalities – and the implicit psychologies – of performance and toward the music. It is tempting to say that he has given up playing with his hands in order to play with his heart.

It may well be that in the future the cycle of three *Majician* albums (also FMP SAJ-37 and SAJ-55) will be regarded as among the most self-consistent and beautiful solo improvisations of the 1980s and a significant intervention in the reprogramming of piano syntax. Though all three are unmistakable gestures to the presence of Cecil Taylor, the differences of basic conception could hardly be greater. Where Taylor's music – and the comparison involves no value judgements – is expressionistic, physically digital, full of "attack" in its technical sense, Tippett's is romantically detached and almost aeolian in its apparent transcendence of recognizable technique. At



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**NEW MUSIC FROM EUROPE:  
THREE VIEWS**

What is "New Music"? Since the *Ars Nova* of the 14th century, the term has been all but impossible to define, and the music harder to categorize, as generations by generation, European composers have added an ever wider, wilder array of outside influences to conventional practices. And the 20th century alone has seen, in theory and in use, more radical alterations and additions than over the previous 500 years combined: serialism, edenic music, electronics, expanded instrumental techniques, and, from America, jazz - which reintroduced improvisation to the European classical sensibility.

But what remains constant in "New Music," from century to century or, as the 20th century accelerates into the 21st, decade to decade, is the individual composer's willingness to explore uncharted territory, find fresh sonic combinations, reveal meaningful experiences in compositional energy. Among these European composers who have accepted this challenge, three of the most powerful, provocative, and generous are Franz Kogimann, Margrit Allena, and Georg Grise. Franz Kogimann's music, like C.D. 6003, 6018 & 6033, cannot be divorced from its environment - Vienna, a city of immense musical, philosophical, and literary traditions. This his compositions are haunted by apparitions - his Second Viennese School, his modernist painters and poets who see fantasy where reality ends; Freud, who sought the key to consciousness in dreams - in a musical soundworld of ghost waltzes, echoes of classicism, and surrealist jazz.

The Dutch bassist/composer Margrit Allena's compositions (hat Art C.D. 6029) have the wary, circumspect logic and wit of a Calder mobile - constantly changing by an attentive thread - with a new view displaced over time inspirational winds blow a new solo. But Stravinsky's influence - both his pre-Second World War scores and post-War conversion - has infiltrated Allena's music, so that less, concise structures and pungent expression prevail.

Georg Grise's dynamic piano - an expansive amalgam of Charles Ives and Cecil Taylor - paints the music seeds for his exquisite fireworks... hat Art C.D. 6028) brilliant explosions of mercurial voicings and events. The German composer ennobles natural immediacy: the basic vocabulary may be 20th century European, but the human polyphony speaks. Free Jazz, and Phil Minton's expanded vocal techniques improvise a dastardly mock opera.

Kogimann, Allena, and Grise share little, stylistically, save perhaps the ability to obscure the distinction between composition and improvisation, and the desire to extend the resonances of European musical tradition into the future, each in his own way. Such imagination and integrity preserve the "new" in New Music.

- Art Lange, August 1989

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the same time, the technique, notably on the long, 47-minute "August Air", is formidably sustained and almost infinitely adaptable.

One hundred and fifty years ago, Leigh Hunt called the piano "a harp in a box". That is roughly how Tippett treats it, which is to say, not roughly at all, but with a caressingly insistent attention to every one of its potential tonalities and overtones. The zither and koto effects he gets by laying pieces of wood across the strings are a long way from Cage's systematisation of discord. Tippett doesn't "prepare" his piano but he does sometimes prepare his music.

Build nothing on confidence, but the night I brought home *Majician III*, with its dedication to concert pianist Andrew Ball, I was playing a BBCSO recording of Havergal Brian's Third Symphony, with Ball as one of the two featured soloists, and it occurred to me in rather pointless and unexpected anticipation how very English Keith Tippett had always sounded, a music full of promissory notes not always immediately or satisfyingly redeemable. On *Majician III*, which may very well be his last solo piano recording for some considerable time (the band *Majician* continues apace), he at last strikes a workable exchange with the American and European keyboard improvisers of the 1970s and 1980s, the Schlippenbachs and Taylors, and bends their imaginations to his own. It's a surprisingly American sound, but of an independent, pioneering sort, and it is as unmistakably beautiful as a loafball.

BRIAN MORTON

# FRANÇOIS LINDEMANN OCTET DIFFERENT MASKS

(Plainisphere PL 1267-47/CD)

Recorded, Saint Blaise, October 1989.  
*Ghost Traces, Light Pictures: Song For Woody, Forgotten Faces; Pourvenir, Duke's Memory, Spiral Mind, Opening; Un Amour Blanc D'En, Different Masks.*  
Matthieu Michel (t, fltn); Yvan Ischet (as); Maurice Magnoni (ss, ts); Robin Eubanks (tb); François Lindemann (p); Olivier Rogg (ky); Ivor Malherbe (b); Marc Ebertha (d).

SOMETIMES I almost despair over jazz from Europe. Can it ever acquire the honours it deserves away from its indigenous bases? If more people heard Paolo Fresu's music, or Pierre Dørge's, or Edward Vesala's, or Page One's, maybe we wouldn't spend so much time moaning about "too much hard bop" or whatever. The alternatives are out there, even if

they are hidden away in territories which appear unlikely dwellings for any kind of jazz—let alone music as good as what's on *Different Masks*.

If you think you don't know any Swiss-based jazz musicians worth hearing, you do now: his name is François Lindemann. This absorbing, swinging record is a triumphant assertion that small-band jazz can still gleam with possibilities in a post-everything crush of music. Nothing Lindemann does is strikingly innovative: the compositions and charts are all his, and he works to not exactly unfamiliar patterns of gather and release, the horns meticulously harmonised, the solos nurtured by a dependable pulse beneath. Yet the music seems fresh in every bar, lively, stunningly performed. Like the most inventive of arrangers, Lindemann is constantly looking to involve the



ensemble rather than alternating themes and solos. The long lines of "Forgotten Faces" and "Light Pictures" exploit every shading of the four horns; "Song For Woody" has them bubbling over each other (no quiescent memorial for Mr Shaw, this). Most telling of all is the way he deploys Rogg's electric keyboards, as ensemble glue, shafts of light or funky vamp.

Rogg is also a mercurial soloist, a less zany Django Bates, perhaps. But it's the playing of Michel and Magnoni which makes the strongest impression: even Eubanks, who should have gone back to New York raving about these guys, has to take second place to Michel's virtuosic flight in "Song For Woody", while Magnoni is ripening a reputation as one of the best saxmen in Europe—dig his jittery, careering tenor solo in "Pourvenir" and the noble lead voice he supplies in "Un Amour".

More Swiss mountains to get this one, I'd say.

RICHARD COOK

# EUROPEAN JAZZ ENSEMBLE LIVE (Ear-Rational Records ECD 1011)

Recorded: Viersen, 29 August 1987.  
*Skizzen; Horizons; Folkman; Davis; Exit-to-ting; Late Morning; Stycton; Razzle-Dazzle.*  
Manfred Schoof (t, fltn), Allan Botschinsky (t, fltn); Ernst Ludwig Petrowsky (as, cl); Gerd Dudek (ss, ss, f); Steve Galloway (tb); Rob van der Broeck (p); Ali Haurand (b); Tony Oxley (d, perc); Uschi Bruning (v).

# EUROPEAN JAZZ ENSEMBLE AT THE PHILHARMONIC COLOGNE (M A Music A 800-2)

Recorded: Cologne, 27 April 1989.  
*Three In Four Or More; Five Jazz; The Ballad; Aspire; Ein Und In Ali's Bar; Past Time.*  
Allan Botschinsky (t, fltn); Enrico Rava (t, fltn); Manfred Schoof (t, fltn); Stan Sulzmann (as, ss); Gerd Dudek (ss, ts); Ernst Ludwig Petrowsky (as, as, ss, cl); Philip Catherine (g); Rob van den Broeck (p); Ali Haurand (b); Tony Levin (d).

THE TITLE "European Jazz Ensemble" presupposes that there is such a thing as European Jazz. For some crusty purists that can never be; the rest of the world is always "imitating" America, which was true once upon a time. Although Django Reinhardt had long since proven that musicians on this side of the Atlantic could come up with a completely original jazz concept, it was not until the 60s that the Continent began to establish a broad-based tradition of its own.

That period of musical emancipation was the perfect *baillien* for the brewing of an essentially European eclecticism. It's a feature of some European groups that I find intensely annoying; rather than enriching the music, the cafeteria approach to culture becomes a bland cocktail of influences. Amongst the best European musicians, though, there has always been a healthy cross-fertilisation of ideas, and Ali Haurand, founder member and spokesman for the EJE, has always played in international groups.

On the 1987 disc, "Skizzen" takes an episodic form, juxtaposing rather shocking snags from the whole band with bouts of free playing before tripping out with a tongue-in-cheek little swing section. Even more structurally bound is "Horizons" by Manfred Schoof, which



contains the various soloists within a set harmonic framework. The composer himself takes the lead, his tone plaintive on the gently rising waves of the theme, his lines spiralling tightly as the piece picks up tempo.

Tony Oxley's "Ente-ta-ning" is one of the more unsettling numbers. The horns menace with intent before diving headlong into a disparate and heated row, saved only by the return of the ominous theme. The last three items seem to have been recorded separately and feature only Hauman and the excellent Gerd Dudek on soprano. Dudek has an iron command of the instrument and keeps his tone very pure. His quick, austere logic leaves the bassist sounding slightly ponderous by comparison but this trio of pieces is perhaps the most satisfying on the album for their simplicity.

The Cologne concert has more of the feeling of a big band, with the extra sax, three trumpets and the addition of an electric guitar. The 20-minute-long "Three In Four Or More" contains the familiar device used by Ornette in the 60s of breaking up free form passages with stabs of thematic material. The "free" parts are organised in various ways; one of the highlights being an improvised exchange between the brass and reed sections. This tendency to compartmentalize is what detracts from a lot of the performances, in particular the passages of big-band swing that are nailed onto some of the pieces. In "Ballad" the mood is sustained and developed, and features an impassioned solo from Ernst Ludwig Petrowsky, the searing harmonics and wildly distorted clusters reminiscent of David Murray's loft days. In fact Petrowsky provides my favourite moments from both offerings – a touch of the manic amidst a slightly reserved company.

ROLAND RAMANAN

# CHARLES LLOYD FISH OUT OF WATER (ECM 1398)

Recorded: Oslo, July 1989.  
*Fish Out Of Water*; *Hagfish Sapiens*, *The Dregs*; *Bharati*;  
*Eyes Of Love*, *Marrow*; *Tellara*.  
Charles Lloyd (ts, f); Bobo Stenson (p); Palle  
Danielsson (bb); Jon Christensen (d).

CHARLES LLOYD's return to playing in the early 80s was not by any means the desperate grab for a rerun of his old cult success with the Woodstock generation that it might have

been. His Montreux festival set from 1982, for instance, in the company of a new protégé in the teenage Michel Petracchini, packed a considerable punch. But though he has always had the knack of putting promising players on the map (Jack DeJohnette and Keith Jarrett in earlier times), and his derivation of versions of jazz with a popular appeal have not always been softened-up hybrids, as an improviser Lloyd has rarely seemed more than a skilled Coltrane disciple, and these days there are even more of them around than when Lloyd first learned the trick.

*Fish Out Of Water* is by no means a record with its eye on the till, because Lloyd (a talented opportunist before his ten-year life-examining sabbatical) has not sought the main chance with either a classic-jazz session or through fusion. He has instead made a very



spacious and contemplative disc, all the musicians for the most part avoiding anything more strenuous than a brisk walking pace, usually preferring a rather drowsy riffle through the pages of the Scandinavian rhythm-section soft-licks catalogue and Coltrane ballad phrasing. The trio unrolls that plush carpet that Christensen and Danielsson have made their own, light cymbal splashes that sound like the impact of knitting needles, little bustling snare-drum patterns scampering like mice dashing for holes.

The opener is on a repeated vamp in which Lloyd adopts a soulful slow-tempo Coltrane mood, but the atmosphere of reflection may have provided more illumination for the players than emerges from the speakers. It's followed by some rain-forest flute sounds, once again over the most discreet rattle and tap from

the drums – though the piece gathers in intensity, with Stenson's quietly impulsive piano phrasing buoyed up by vibrant arco sounds from Danielsson, and eventually takes on an African feel, with a mid-register melody line dancing over a repeated bass note. Lloyd finally muscles into it with searing Traneish phrases, and he and Stenson discover a resourceful interplay here, with the saxophonist adopting a tremulous, quavering tone around the hovering tonal centre.

Such moments apart, a lot of this album drifts like leaves on a stream. They look pretty enough, but how do you tell one from another? Hardly the album to put Charles Lloyd back in there among the powerbrokers.

JOHN FORDHAM

# GUY BARKER HOLLY J (Miles Music MM078)

Recorded: London, 6 & 7 March 1989.  
*Life Is A Beach*, *I Never Entered My Mind*, *Merz Talbot*;  
*Three Minutes Away*, *How About It*, *Holly J*.  
Barker (tr), Nigel Hitchcock (as, ts); Jason Rebello  
(p); Chris Laurence (bb); Clark Tracey (db), Frank  
Ricotti (vib).

THIS is an album by some of the most exciting musicians on the British jazz scene. Ricotti and Laurence have been around since the early 70s, while the remaining musicians have come to prominence during the last five years. This is the first time the group have played together, although Barker's association with drummer Clark Tracey's quintet established his reputation on the British circuit. But while the overall feel of the album is one of cautious adventure, it is not necessarily the unfamiliarity of the musicians that's to blame.

The musicians are all highly competent; Barker careful and assured, contrasting Hitchcock's mobility, while Laurence's bass is harmonically and rhythmically more sophisticated than the straight-ahead piano and drums. However, Barker's material – three originals, two by Hitchcock and one standard – is firmly in the tradition of the early 60s Blue Note and acoustic Miles Davis sessions, and echoes the work of similar "neoclassicists" such as Greg Marvin, Jim Snidero, Blanchard/Harrison, Ralph Moore, Superblue and the clear-thinking post-bop/mainstreamer Tom Harrell. And herein lies the problem. When sleeve annotator Mike Hennessey says, "I would defy





anyone in a blindfold test to determine whether the five musicians on this date come from Neasden or New York," he is right.

The price of "neoclassicism" is that so many musicians have put their faith in a narrow repository of style, drawing on similar sources of inspiration. So however well the band negotiate the unusual construction of "Life Is A Beach", and despite Barker's sensitive ballad performance on "It Never Entered My Mind" and Rebello's crafty, angular lines on the 12-bar blues "Mr Talbor", there is no sense of discovery here, only craftsmanship. The "neo" methodology of assimilation and imitation is yet to realise the deferred promise of innovation. The message from *Holly J* is stay tuned for more of the same.

STUART NICHOLSON

**GLEN VELEZ**  
**ASSYRIAN ROSE**  
(CMP CD 42)

Recorded: Zuido Zerkall, (West) Germany, June 1989.

*Blue Castle, Offering To Anahit; Assyrian Rose, Dnala; Amazonas, Wren Chant, Silver Lining.*  
Glen Velez (guitar, gaval, wood drum, Venezuelan maracas, steel drum, riq, bendir, tamborin, Chinese opera gong, v), Layne Redmond (gaval, Japanese frame drum, Lefima bodhran, v), Steve Gorn (bamboo flute, South American flute), John Clark (fr hn); Howard Levy (bmc, p).

VELEZ PAID AT LEAST a portion of his dues working for Steve Reich. It doesn't, happily, seem to have rubbed off. Velez's own work is completely unaffected by Reich's incurable insensitivity to timbre and colour and *Assyrian Rose* is one of the most beautiful, as well as complex, of recent percussion-led albums in a jazz/systems idiom. CMP's reputation in this sort of cross-over experiment grows by the month. Or deserves to.

The instrumentation is imaginative and subtle, with great emphasis given to Howard Levy's Thielmannish harp and Steve Gorn's ethnic pipes. Gorn's influence seems to extend into a Latin feel to some of the compositions, notably "Amazonas" and the long "Dnala", which is beautifully sustained and controlled over a rapid pulse on tuned metal percussion (either the opera gong or the steel drum).

There is a certain inevitable difficulty in separating the percussion players, and a certain pointlessness, too, for the group is tightly

organized and disciplined and Walter Quintus's engineering typically precise. How much of the music is improvised, and how much is simple variation on folkish ostinati isn't clear. Nonetheless, there is little of that slap-happy unfinishability that can make a WOMAD promotion seem like the musical equivalent of eternity.

Velez seems to favour a basic split rhythm (track incros are disconcertingly similar) but he builds dramatically new material on it each time, adding instrumental colour as seems appropriate and ruthlessly exploiting the slightly out-of-tune illusion of the valve horn, flutes and harmonicas to slide between scales and modes. For East-meets-West eclecticism, you'll look hard for anything more compelling than *Assyrian Rose*'s spacy Moroccan confab.

BRIAN MORTON



**JOHN McLAUGHLIN TRIO**  
**LIVE AT THE ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL**  
(JMT 834 436-1 [LP], -2 [CD],  
-4 [MC])

Recorded: London, 27 November 1989.

*Blue In Green, Just Ideas, Jazz, Flaminio, Pato's Love, Master Yogan.*  
John McLaughlin (g, g syn); Kai Eckhardt (b); Trilok Gurtu (perc).

**JOHN ABERCROMBIE**  
**ANIMATO**  
(ECM 1411)

Recorded: Oslo, October 1989.

*Right Now, Single Moon, Aghave, First Light, Last Light, For Haps Of Hope, Bright Reggae, Olden Meeting.*  
John Abercrombie (g, g syn), Jon Christensen (d, perc), Vince Mendoza (composer, syn), Judd Miller (syn, g, EVI).

WHACK THEM planks, Johns, while we get the glib putdowns out of the way first. So, then, here are two trio recordings featuring guitarists who are both famous and clever. Maybe the McLaughlin Trio represents the final victory of good taste over art. Then again, maybe Trilok Gurtu's gleeful flurries of thuds, cracks and wallops make a nonsense of that. And perhaps, by contrast, Abercrombie's offering represents the hard-won, ultimate triumph of musical energy over highly-stylised production criteria, even if producer Manfred Eicher makes Jon Christensen sound like Jack DeJohnette, which is something he succeeds in doing with most drummers anyway, and already I'm reduced to cheap shots like that one. Start again.

McLaughlin first. It has to be said that, to the weary Brit, the most startling thing about this record is the sleeve, which depicts London's South Bank arts complex in a twilight panorama – and it looks vibrant and magical and, er, arty and complex and probably does more to glamorise the venue than any amount of careful marketing could do.

And the music? Well, it's all in there, somewhere. There's the blues, there's bebop of sorts, there are some beautiful tunes, there's a sort of loopy Soft-Machine-circa-Bandless-meets-Joe-Pass aspect to it too, but still it all sounds unnecessarily sensible. There are ways of leaving ideas out of music and letting the gaps emphasise their implicit existence. Unfortunately, none of them feature here. This record is too measured and reasonable by half, but is at least partly redeemed by the excellent recording quality and the inevitable assured virtuosity of the musicians. But they've already taught us much of what they know.

Abercrombie's group succeeds in many ways where McLaughlin's fails, if you choose to judge them by the same criteria. Even within the traditionally spartan atmosphere of an ECM record, the combination of Abercrombie's incisive yet quietly menacing performance with some wayward instrumental colouring from his associates (Mendoza's individual "Composer" credit seems to refer to a sequencing instrument rather than to the habit as such, and Miller owns up to playing the relentlessly unpopular EVI) produces a consistently inventive set of short-to-middling pieces which are quietly uncompromising in their emotional range.

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# FAST LICKS

\*\*\*

*Graham Lock threads his way through May's maze of releases.*

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG & DUKE ELLINGTON: THE COMPLETE LOUIS ARMSTRONG & DUKE ELLINGTON SESSIONS (Roulette Jazz CDP 7938442).** An unexpected pleasure. Many star summits end up as less than the sum of their parts, but this 1961 meeting – the first between jazz's two greatest stars, both then in their 60s – produced some outstanding music. The set-up (Armstrong's regular All Stars with Ellington on piano, playing a set of 17 Duca compositions) makes for an initially strange balance, as Ellingtonian urbanity leavens the All Stars' more downhome New Orleans proclivities; but ultimately it works well, shedding new light on the two leading protagonists. Armstrong discovers singular depths in many of the tunes, bringing a startlingly fiery guile to "Black And Tan Fantasy", for example; while Ellington's terse, spiky piano is a revelation throughout. A respectful, joyful session – and arguably Armstrong's last great jazz recording before the showbiz treadmill claimed him.

**KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN: IN FREUND-SCHAFT, TRAUM-FORMEL, AMOUR (Deutsche Grammophon 423 378-2).** Released here last year, I think, but I've only just bought a CD player so it's new to me – and a current favourite. This is Stockhausen at his most intimate and playful: *In Friendship* and the five pieces of *Amor* are for solo clarinet, the brief *Drum Formula* is for solo basset-horn (both played brilliantly by Suzanne Stephens), and nearly all were written as birthday/Xmas presents for either Stephens or other members of Stockhausen's immediate family. The charm of these pieces lies partly in the way Stockhausen fashions an abstract beauty from almost programmatic devices – the layers of *In Friendship* moving towards each other, the beat of butterfly wings imitated in *Amor*'s "The Butterflies Are Playing" – but no less remarkable is the way in which all the various complex processes (of language, structure, etc) are subsumed within the sheer loveliness of the sound-world Stockhausen has created.

**TONY SCOTT: DEDICATIONS (Line COCD 9 00803 0).** After the formal clarity of Suzanne Stephens, Tony Scott's jazz-inflected clarinet has an almost drunken grit, though one that's not without its particular appeal. *Dedications* is a reissue of the *Sang Heroes* LP, last released in the 1980s but featuring material first recorded in the late 50s, much of it with the Bill Evans Trio. This CD adds three extra tracks – a live "Blues For Charlie Parker" and two clarinet/koto duos – but for me the most moving tracks were all on the LP release: notably, a passionate clarinet/flamenco guitar duet on "Lament To Manolete" and the eerie clarinet/baritone dialogue of "Portrait Of Anne Frank".

**BUD POWELL: THE BUD POWELL TRIO PLAYS (Roulette Jazz CDP 7939022); THE BEST OF**



**BUD POWELL (Blue Note CDP 7 93204 2).** Brian Priestley's sleeve-note to the Roulette release points out that Bud Powell "remains one of the most under-appreciated, and in fact under-heard, of all the jazz greats" and suggests that his music's high levels of energy and intensity could be the explanation. If intensity includes the emotional pain that can break through his music, then I'd agree: on a track such as "My Devotion" (from the Roulette CD), where an insistent chord repeatedly rings out like a death-knell, the feeling of personal anguish is utterly discomfiting. That said, most of *The Bud Powell Trio Plays* (comprising sessions from 1947 and 1953) is bright, propulsive and captivating, with only the occasional hint of the personal demons that were later to overwhelm him. The Blue Note *Best Of* compilation has 15 tracks, 12 of them trio

performances, covers the period 1949-1963 and includes several of Powell's best-known compositions – "Un Poco Loco", "Parisian Thoroughfare", "Glas Enclosure". Judicious selection means there's nothing as disturbing as "My Devotion", but the buoyancy that makes the 1947 set so attractive is largely absent too.

**HERBIE NICHOLS: THE BETHLEHEM SESSION (Affinity CD AFF 759); DODO MARMAROSA: THE CHICAGO SESSIONS (Affinity CD AFF 755).** Talking of neglected pianists, here are two who are probably even more under-heard than Bud Powell, though Herbie Nichols's work has become better known in the last few years. Even so, attention has focused more on his Blue Note recordings than on this superb trio set which he made for the Bethlehem label in 1957 and which proved to be the last time he was able to record his own music. Like Monk, with whom he is sometimes compared, Nichols was as impressive a composer as he was a player and, again like Monk, he seemed to anticipate the avant-garde while staying within the formal confines of bebop. Once inside, though, he then went as far out as possible, breaking up the time and reshaping the melody line with bravura ("Argumentative", "Beyond Recall"), yet retaining the gift to write catchy tunes ("Every Cloud"). We know now the details of Nichols's tragic life; Dodo Marmarosa's fate remains a mystery. A popular, much-recorded bebop pianist in the late 40s, he dropped out of the scene for a decade, reappeared in Chicago in 1961 (when he cut the ten trio tracks on this CD) and 1962 (when he accompanied trumpeter Bill Hardman on a further six tracks included here), then simply vanished. Today no one seems to know whether he's alive or dead.

**JAMES SPAULDING: BRILLIANT CORNERS (Mercury VG 651 600510); BILL BARRON: THE NEXT PLATEAU (Mercury VG 651 600605).** Did someone mention Monk? James Spaulding, unsung sideman of innumerable 60s Blue Note sessions, devotes only his second LP as leader to (mostly) Monk compositions. There's lovely flur on "Reflections" and "Ask Me Now", gloriously energetic alto on "Brilliant Corners"; but the whole session is a pleasure (only marred slightly by some boringly "correct"

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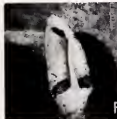
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*As an alchemist, Hauser alters the weight, shape, density, color, and texture of isolated sounds, transforming cymbal strokes into an opaque cloud, a drum thud into a porous echo, a gong splash into a transparent watercolor. His virtuosity inspires motion studies, dramatic dances of dreamlike aggression and compassion ("Treumblender"), a manmade maze of acoustic details and phenomena ("Leb-rinth").*

*If, as John Ruskin said, architecture is frozen music, perhaps Solodrumming institutes music as liquid architecture. The space (Martin-Gropius-Bau) in which these sounds originated influences their aural characteristics: clarity of articulation/gesture, exquisite resonance, delay, decay, ambience, added to Hauser's crisp technique, his formal concerns, his zen conception, create new definitions of those areas we occupy in mind and body.*

—Art Lange  
August 1989

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bop trumpet from Wallace Roney). Late tenorist Bill Barron was also a Monk fan as his opening title — "This One's For Monk" — makes clear. But he's also his own man, adept at adding attractively distinctive twists and turns to a post-bop vocabulary. This 1987 quarter recording also gives plenty of solo space to brother Kenny, but it is Bill's bristling tenor and, particularly, his sharp, witty writing which make it a memorable epiphany.

URSULA OPPENS: AMERICAN PIANO MUSIC OF OUR TIME (*Musik & Arts* CD-604); THOMAS DEMENGA: J S BACH, ELLIOTT CARTER (*ECM New Series* 1391). Elliott Carter is the link-man here: his 1980 "Night Fantasies" is the centerpiece of the Oppens CD, and he's also the featured composer on the second of Thomas Demenga's series of recordings which pair a Bach cello suite with the work of a contemporary master. I think the Oppens set makes better aesthetic sense. One of America's premier concert pianists, she's set "Night Fantasies" and John Adams's "Phrygian Gates" (the two major piano pieces of the last ten years) beside six brief tangos by such modern composers as Julius Hemphill, Conlon Nancarrow and Lukas Foss. Her touch is fluent and precise; the pieces themselves prove enchanting. Highlight of the Demenga CD is Carter's vivacious, dramatic "Triple Duo", though I also liked the flute/clarinet duo "Esprit Rude, Esprit Doux".

MIKE WESTBROOK BANEX OFF ABBEY ROAD (*Tiptoe* 888 805). Life is full of surprises. I never thought I'd hate a Mike Westbrook recording, but this one's unlistenable. It's as if the project has brought out the worst in everyone: Kate Westbrook runs through her gamut of silly voices, Phil Minton's vocals are at their most absurdly strangled, Brian Godding indulges his penchant for ponderous rock-guitar clichés and Mike assaults the tunes (some of the Beatles' weaker, too) with his most turgid and bombastic arrangements. Two points — the Beatles didn't write with improvisers in mind, and they didn't so much write songs as make records, the second of which was an integral part of the whole. That's why cover versions tend to end up, as here, with the Egg Man all over their face.

WARNE MARSH: POSTHUMOUS (*Interplay* IP 8604); MILT JACKSON: FROM OPUS DE JAZZ TO JAZZ SKYLINE (*Savvy Jazz* VG 655 650103). Essential listening for fans of Warne Marsh and Lucky Thompson, two of my favorite post-war tenor players. Marsh's *Posthumous* is a 1985 quartet date with pianist Susan Chea, who is considerably more at ease here than on her later duo record with Marsh. If jazz is the sound of surprise, then Warne Marsh is the sound of jazz. His harmonic inventiveness constantly confounds expectations as he feints and shuffles through these oblique takes on various standards — never more hypnotically than on the ballad "Inside Out" (which is where it turns "My Romance"), seven minutes of lovely amazement. The Milt Jackson CD is a reissue of two mid-50s LPs, *Opus De Jazz* and *The Jazz*



*Skyline*: the first is fine, but it's the latter which has Lucky Thompson. He's that rare player who doesn't fit easily into either the Hawkins or Young schools of tenor, but sounds like a unique configuration of both influences with a very personal slant on time, tone and phrasing. Two ballads stand out — "Angel Face" and "What's New" — though his gruff frolic through "The Lady Is A Tramp" is also a gas.

SUN RA AND HIS SOLAR MYTH ARKSTRA: THE SOLAR MYTH APPROACH (*Affinity* CD AFF 760). A CD reissue of the two *Solar Myth* LPs recorded in New York in 1970-71. If the sessions display many of Ra's characteristic qualities without ever quite achieving the lift-off of his most extraordinary moments,

there's still plenty to enjoy — from his love of spacy synth solos to his use of weird orchestral textures and multifarious percussion. What really bugs me is that in transferring the records to CD Affinity have LEFT OFF two tracks from the second LP, "Interpretation" and "Strange Worlds", the latter of which is a wonderfully uproarious horn romp. Ra's fans say, "Spaceship — YES! Censorship — NO!"

BLAU FRONTAL: BLAU FRONTAL (*Jazzhaus Musik* JHM 37 CD). Debut release from a German trio, formerly part of the Nana Quartet, who studiously avoid the German tradition of loud free jazz for a quieter, more controlled chamber approach that recalls Jimmy Giuffrè's drummerless trio of the early 1960s. The language is derivative of the Giuffrè/Baxton/Lacy lineage, but Roger Hanschel (soprano, alto, clarinet), Hans Ludemann (piano) and Rainer Linke (bass) create airy, intimate interplays that range from the piping attack of "Das Jagen Ist Des Saxophonisten Lust" to the dark timbres of "Im August". My only complaint is their occasional shrillness.

GERALD WILSON BIG BAND: MOMENT OF TRUTH (*Capitol/Pacific Jazz* CDP 7 92928 2); CURTIS COUNCE GROUP: SONORITY (*Contemporary C* 7655). West Coast band-leader/trumpeter Gerald Wilson is a little-talked-of figure these days, so there's good reason to recommend his late 50s *Moment Of Truth* big-band session from the latest batch of mid-price Pacific Jazz CD reissues. Other good reasons include the presence of Carmell Jones, Bud Shank, Teddy Edwards, Harold Land and a young Joe Pass among the soloists; plus outstanding tracks like Latin swinger "Viva Tiesdo", slow blues "Moment Of Truth" and haunting ballad "Terri". Wilson also turns up in trumpeter guise on *Sonority*, a collection of unreleased 1956-58 Curtis Counce Group tracks. Most are alternate takes or out-takes, but there are highlights too — Harold Land's limpid tenor on "How Long Has This Been Going On" and three Elmo Hope tunes ("So Nice", "Origin", "Bella Rosa") with the composer on piano. Stereotyping I know, but I do prefer these West Coast players' laid-back bebop to the frantic scrabbling of so many East Coast hard boppers.

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# OUTLINES

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*Leo Records' eight-CD box-set Document pays tribute to Russian jazz of the pre-glasnost era. Kenny Mathieson listens to what went on behind the Iron Curtain.*

THE RELEASE OF *Document: New Music From Russia - The 1980s* should be a moment of triumph for the indefatigable Leo Feigin, who has laboured mightily, and at considerable personal cost, to champion new music from the Soviet Union. Sadly, though, the occasion is clouded for the producer, as his opening essay in the handsome (but irritatingly small-printed) booklet included in the box makes clear.

The climate for new music from Russia (Leo's preferred usage) in the West is not improving, he laments, and even *Vire* is indicted for neglecting to cover the Festival of New Soviet Music in Zurich last year. In the UK, "55 million brains eroded by The Beatles" ignore these musicians (Alexander Khan takes a different view of the Fab Four in his essay on The Ganelin Trio), while critics jump at the chance to review his invaluable Braxton, Taylor or Carlos Ward releases.

Leo's anger is not difficult to understand, and not much more difficult to justify. Certainly, his sales figures reflect widespread disinterest in developments from the Soviet Union, while last year's month-long season of Soviet Arts in Glasgow, *New Beginnings*, found room for much contemporary "classical" music, but none at all for improvised music.

*Document* is an attempt to redress the imbalance in our exposure to developments on the Russian new music scene, although Leo himself declares that it is an imperfect one, given its size and diversity, reflecting in turn the country itself.

The final disc features the most familiar names from the scene, with individual contributions and a group piece (recorded in concert in London during their visit in 1984) from the members of The Ganelin Trio, reedman Vladimir Chekasin, drummer Vladimir Tarasov, and pianist Vyacheslav Ganelin. The music gives credence to the theory that, despite increasing tensions which pushed them to an eventual break-up, they were more creative together than apart, while Khan's essay under-

lines their importance in the development of contemporary music in their homeland.

Pianist Sergei Kuryokhin's role as a prime mover is emphasised by his appearance on three discs, in a fine duo with acerbic reedman Anatoly Vaprtov, a "superstar" trio with Chekasin and Boris Grebenshchikov (who became the first member of this coterie to record for a major Western label with his *Radio Silence* pop set for CBS last year), and as leader of his own Trio, represented here by their "First Recordings" from March 1980.

The Kuryokhin trio cut with Chekasin and Grebenshchikov, "Exercise", is an outtake of the earlier *Exercise*, enthusiastically received on its release over here, and still brimming over with good humour and exhilarating flashes of brilliance. It shares a disc with another of Leo Records' earliest artists, the Siberian group Homo Liber. In their first Western manifestation they appeared as a quartet, but that was a short-lived arrangement, as Khan explains. Pianist Yuri Yuzkevich and saxophonist Vladimir Tolstachev were the creative core of the group in any case, as they demonstrate on their three duo selections included here.

The two Valentinas, composer and multi-instrumentalist Goscharova and the remarkable singer Ponomareva, have also had records out here. Goncharova's lengthy *Ocean* dominates their disc, an ambitiously large-scale work comprising ten sections of varied, brooding, mystical reflection in which she alters the instrumentation to fit both the programmatic and musical character of each section. It is minimalist in its sparse musical textures rather than in the Western sense, although less so than Leo's earlier Kuryokhin/Grebenshchikov release *Mad Nightingale In The Russian Forest*.

The most directly jazz-based music comes in the shape of a big band led by Vladimir Chekasin, which performs a "Concerto For Voice" by Konstantin Petrosian, sung by Dutevsk Hovhannessian, whose lucid, rather mainstream style is a striking contrast with both Ponomareva, and with Irina Bogdanova, who contributes a vocal to the set's opening piece, a dramatic but unconventional folk-based creation called "Dearly Departed".

Jazz Group Arkhangelsk have recorded for the label before, but "Above The Sun, Below The Moon" is a studio recording, and displays greater structural coherence than the bustling live performance on their earlier record. Alex-

ander Sakunov is one of the newer voices on the scene, and while his keening saxophone blues "Big Explosion" is in a more conventionally Western jazz mode, he is a player of evident power.

I was less taken with the effects-laden music-and-poetry fusions of Orkestrion, but they share a disc with the most ear-catching of the newer players, the 24-year-old Lithuanian saxophonist Petras Vysniauskas. "In Memoriam", a lengthy, exploratory creation with keyboard player Kestutis Lusa, demonstrates Vysniauskas's precocious grip of instrumental technique on both alto and soprano (he apparently also shines on tenor and baritone), allied to a fiery, questing musical intelligence.

I am not sure whether it has anything to do with the example of the Ganelins, but the trio seems a popular form. Trio-O are a horn trio with an interesting line in spacious, flowing textures and curious sound effects, although they are represented by two different line-ups here, and are expanded to a quartet for their second, longer composition, with the addition of the voice of Saiko Namchylak.

The Moscow Improvising Trio institutionalise their personnel switches, playing under that name when drummer Sergey Busakhin joins the duo of Andrei Solov'yev and Igor Grigoriev, and as The Roof when percussionist Michael Zhukhov replaces Busakhin, but without occasioning, on the evidence of the cuts here, any major changes in their slightly static (the vibrant "Natural Selection" is an exception), spacy improvisations. The Makarov New Improvised Music Trio occupy adjacent musical territory, but favour a starker, more stripped-down register much of the time, with heavy emphasis on percussive noises.

There is no doubt that some of the earlier pieces included in this set are now largely of historical interest, rather than further discoveries in Leo Records' ongoing revelation of the Russian new music scene, but that has its own value. Ultimately, there may be more for the enquiring mind than the passionate heart in *Document*, but it is a fascinating monument to a decade of music from a self-evidently significant music scene we still know too little about, and also to the magnificent perseverance of a unique and single-minded record producer.

*Document: New Music From Russia - the 1980s* is available now by subscription in a limited edition of 1000 copies from Leo Records, 35 Cascade Avenue, London N10 3PT, price £120.00.

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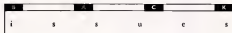
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## THE SEEDY WORLD OF CD PRICES

OF ALL types of music, the most adversely affected by the CD revolution has to be jazz.

Where most other music – rock and, especially, classical – is marvellously catered for with the abundant availability of both bargain and mid-price CDs, jazz labels (with the honourable exception of Blue Note) have not fully-embraced a more user-friendly price structure.

Many labels, such as ECM, Black Saint, DIW etc, cost anything between £12–£16 per CD. There seems to me to be no reason why a company's back catalogue cannot be released at mid-price. As for the outrageously inflated price of Japanese CDs – anyone who pays such ludicrous prices needs their head examining! £40 for a Miles Davis double-CD, which has a manufacturing cost of around £2, is nothing short of daylight robbery. But as long as punters are willing to pay such extortionate prices, companies will go on charging them.

It's about time *Wire* stood up to be counted on this issue.

STEWART J TRAY, Manchester

*Well, I'd rather be counted sitting down. But if it's any consolation, you won't this month's bottle of Jim Beam bourbon – GL*

## THE WRITE PLACE

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## NOT QUITE OVER THE HILL

NEVER HAVING been one to miss the opportunity to rummage through the shelves of an obscure record shop, I recently unearthed something of a gem. Whilst in Hamilton, Bermuda (attending a family wedding – which I hasten to add was compulsory), I sifted through the "sale" items in The Music Box.

There, amongst the reggae and calypso, was a brand new copy of Carla Bley's *Evaluator Over The Hill*. The corners were a little frayed, as a result of sitting on the shelves so long, but it was otherwise untouched and was reduced to the remarkable price of \$5. Needless to say I purchased it and, having played it through, found it absorbing and enjoyable, if at times a little strange. My reaction to it *now*, as a jazz fan, is very different from my reaction on first hearing the record, when it was released in the early 70s and seemed completely incomprehensible as music.

AIDAN HALLETT, Co Armagh

## TAXING POLLS

I THINK it's a pity that broader debates about the politics and aesthetics of the music are not considered at greater length. Artist profiles and record reviews often contain some interesting general remarks, but only briefly and in passing. I'd like to see both some more general essays, and also some roundtable discussions, involving both musicians and critics, on issues like: Is jazz currently too conservative? What is British about British jazz? Where is improvised music going?

DAVID BUCKINGHAM, London

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